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Liveness: Performance of Ideology and Technology in the Changing Media Environment

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Summary

"Liveness" is a crucial concept that traverses the boundaries of many academic disciplines; however, most prominently, performance studies, media studies, and music studies have been engaged in the ongoing debate regarding its shifting parameters. Not only does the concept navigate through multiple academic disciplines, but it also calls attention to the constantly morphing conditions of social interaction and community formation in an ever-digitizing world. Defined from a wide range of perspectives throughout history under specific sociocultural circumstances, the idea has brought critical scrutiny to the related questions of presence, disappearance, absence, and recurrence of the performing subject. At the same time, immediacy, temporality, and authenticity of human contact as well as human-to-nonhuman contact have also been interrogated under the rubric of liveness.

Interdisciplinary studies of liveness tend to inquire into three areas: ideology, technology, and ontology of performance, which are by no means fixed terrains but rather overlapping and corroborating regimes reflecting the transforming notions of liveness. As the medium of performance became more diversified and convergent over time, the notion of liveness accordingly became complicated. Liveness is no longer defined simply as "bodily co-presence of actors and spectators" (Erika Fischer-Lichte), but with historical specificity in mind and with an eye to the way "the idea of what counts culturally as live experience changes over time in relation to technological change" (Philip Auslander, "Digital Liveness: A Historic-Philosophical Perspective," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 34, no. 3 [2012], 3).

There are no limitations to the performance genres and platforms that fall under the critical analysis of liveness: music, TV, stage plays, online media, live-action roleplay (LARP), and mixed-reality performance—"mixing of the real and virtual as well as their combination of live performance and interactivity" (Steve Benford and Gabriella Giannachi, *Performing Mixed Reality* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011], 1)—all wrestle with the ontological

questions of what is live. On a more profound level, the derivative semantics of liveness, such as "live," "alive," and "life," point to the ontological dimension of the term as they collectively articulate the "ephemerality, mediation, reproduction, and representation" (Daniel Sack, *After Live* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015], 13) of human life.

Keywords: live performance, recorded music, television studies, mixed-reality performance, ontology of performance, Peggy Phelan, Philip Auslander, multimedia performance, immediacy

Definition and Scope of the Term

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "liveness" is defined as "a performance, heard or watched at the time of its occurrence, as distinguished from one recorded on film, tape, etc."[1] This description points to the co-presence of spectators and performers as the defining condition for liveness to emerge. If we were to paraphrase the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition through the lens of theater critic Eric Bentley's formulaic delineation of performance—"A impersonates B while C looks on"—then whether A/B's temporal and spatial presence should coincide with C becomes the central issue at stake in the debate on liveness.[2] Co-presence here is not simply a matter of being in the same time and space; more crucially, it is a matter of the shifting conditions of social interactions brought about by the changes in media and technology.

Liveness and its etymological relatives, such as "live," "alive," and "life," are agile concepts often used interchangeably with diverse conceptual paradigms referencing the mode of performance, media platform, processes of production and consumption, value judgment system, and even deep existential inquiry.[3] So versatile and mobile is the semantic range of liveness that it is probably wiser to approach the notion by exploring what set of concepts "liveness" is often artificially pitted against: in various disciplines of music, performance, and media studies, "digital," "mediatized," "recorded," "secondhand," "rehearsed," and "inauthentic" tend to be brought into the paradigm.

The first term, "digital," references a mode of performance, given the frequently used opposition between digital performance and live performance; the major concern embedded in this assumed opposition is whether performers and spectators are present in the same time and space or not. Digital performance supposes that there are some elements not present in the same time and space with the audience, for example, live performers are replaced by their digital or holographic projections to interface with a live audience or digitized performers coexist with live performers on stage.

Often interchangeable with "digital" is "mediatized," which references the immediacy of the interaction between performers and spectators. Hence, the supposed binary between live and mediatized concerns media platforms that channel that interaction and its varying degrees of intensity. Often this opposition assumes that what the audience members see and hear on stage is a more intimate presentation without any mediation, whereas what they see and hear on screen are mediatized events, in which the closeness of interactions between live performers and spectators has been diluted.

The third oppositional term, "recorded," mostly concerns how performance is produced; the assumption is that for a performance to be recorded, there has to have been a live performance that took place in the studio or on stage in the past. This binary is most concerned with temporal flow, in the sense that live performance can only exist in the present, whereas recorded performance is nothing more than the revived live performance of the past.

Conversant with the notion of "recorded" is the concept of "secondhand," which often refers to the process of consumption; it is based on the premise that recorded performance is infinitely reproducible and therefore not the original as it was presented live on stage, or in the studio at the time of recording. Hence, what the viewers/listeners are getting out of recorded performance is something that has been consumed already.

By the same token, the implications of "secondhand" are fluidly interchangeable with those of "rehearsed"—built on the premise that improvisational freshness is an essential part of what constitutes live, or even "authentic." The notion of "authentic" is related to the attitude that live performance is something more valuable and genuine than its counterpart. It also emerges from the anxieties about "the collapse of the real into the virtual and the construction of identity in the space of technology."[4] This assumed binary implies the risk-taking nature of a live performance, as there can be no redoing or editing—and thus more authentic.

These sets of binary oppositions are hypothetical; in reality, it is impossible to distinguish the pure notion of liveness from the other concepts. The oppositions listed above are meaningful only to the extent that they function as a useful starting point for their eventual intersections and conceptual convergence in actual performance.

Debate in Performance Studies

While performance studies is not the only academic discipline to have hosted a fertile debate on liveness, it is certainly privileged in the sense that it has witnessed rigorous articulation of the concept that has reflected upon the central premise of the field: performance itself. The question of what constitutes a performance cannot be separated from the calibration of liveness as a discourse that encompasses a wide range of often seemingly contradicting concepts, such as ephemerality and recording, as well as disappearance and remains. The two most prominent debaters in the field are arguably Peggy Phelan and Philip Auslander. Their varying positions have generated many more critical reviews and invited expanded arguments by other performance studies scholars such as Mathew Causey, Steve Dixon, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, Daniel Sack, Chris Salter, and Rebecca Schneider.

Staunchly upholding the position that performance occurs over time and cannot be repeated, Phelan delivered a decisive thesis on live performance in her oft-cited book *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (1993): "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation of representations."[5] Positing the ephemerality of human existence that is subject to the tyranny of irreversible time as the central claim to liveness, she goes on to propose that "performance is an art

form which most fully understands the generative possibilities of disappearance. Poised forever at the threshold of the present, performance enacts the productive appeal of the non-reproductive."[6] This co-presence of time and space between performers and the audience is what Auslander designates as "classic liveness" or "the default definition of liveness."[7] It is closely related to the corporeal presence of audience and performer, which forms the basis for the assumed binary opposition between the live and the recorded. Indeed, not only performance art but also installation art places considerable emphasis on the presence of the material body, whether it be the performer's or the spectator's. For instance, in reflecting on Liz Phillips's responsive installations, cultural studies scholar Paula Rabinowitz saw the engagement of audience's bodies with an installed object a central way of making "emptiness and negativity tangible, and even visible."[8]

Phelan's insistence on the present moment as the only habitus of live performance is not simply concerned with the mere co-presence of the performer and spectator in a temporal and spatial overlap; rather, it lies within the ontological registers of how the potentiality of human lives is predicated on their inevitable decline. As she writes in *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (1997), the predicament of disappearance is a universal condition that confronts mankind: "Severed from the placenta and cast from the womb, we enter the world as an amputated body whose being will be determined by the very mortality of that body."[9] It is the spirit of looking at live events as the flip side of disappearance and death on which her insistence on live events' irreparability rests. As has been observed by Daniel Sack, Phelan's position agrees with that of Herbert Blau, who saw the ontological core of live performance as defined by the very fact that performers' live bodies literally can die in front of spectators' eyes.[10]

Phelan's Lacan/Derrida-inflected position on liveness was fully refuted by Philip Auslander's 1999 book *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. Perhaps taking Phelan's advocacy of liveness too literally without considering its philosophical underpinnings, Auslander criticized Phelan's thesis for its "reductive binary opposition of the live and the mediatized"[11] while suggesting that the very concept of liveness exists through mediatization. Auslander clarified this position by claiming that "the relationship between the live and the mediatized is one of competitive opposition at the level of cultural economy"[12] and that the opposition is not "deriving from the intrinsic characteristics of live and mediatized forms but, rather as determined by cultural and historical contingencies."[13] His book is an argument against the deterministic distinction between live and mediatized as well as "the traditional assumption that the live precedes the mediatized."[14]

Auslander's position, in turn, was met with criticism from media studies and arts scholar Steve Dixon, who pointed out that Auslander neglected "key phenomenological perceptions about presence and plentitude, and related differences in our reception of live and mediatized performance forms."[15] For Dixon, liveness for the spectator is not just being there, as the phenomenological experience tends to differ depending on the medium and the mode of performance presented to the audience, whether live, recorded, or a combination of both. Dixon concludes that spectators experience a qualitatively different perception of performance depending on the presence and absence of live corporeal bodies: "Watching film, video, and digital media is a more voyeuristic experience than watching live performance, since in the literal sense of the word, the onlooker is

looking from a position without fear of being seen by the watched."[16] In many ways, Dixon's position transposes the centrality of immediacy—a key concept that television studies has taken into account in articulating liveness—onto the immersive experience of the viewing subject.

Despite the criticism, Auslander's position that "liveness is not an ontologically defined condition but a historically variable effect of mediatization"[17] is generally seconded by scholars who work on multimedia or mixed-reality performances. For instance, performance studies scholar Shannon Jackson and theater practitioner Marianne Weems, in their collaborative publication on a multimedia performance group, Builders Association, echoed Auslander's position that theater from its inception fluidly incorporated technology and media to manipulate the conceptions of time and the ensuing meaning of liveness: "Once we remember the history of technology that is embedded in the history of theater, it becomes impossible to polarize the live purity of performance with the mediatized impurity of technology. They have been in each other's pockets from the start."[18] In a similar vein, in speaking of Berlin Dadaist Raoul Hausmann's work, art historian Ina Blom demystifies the purity emanating from the immediate presence of a material body by calling attention to how televisual reality has multiplied the perception of the material body: "If presence is multiplied, it evokes time and space beyond the most immediate *reach* and *touch* of the concrete body."[19]

Other scholars working with the legacy of this debate tend to accommodate selective aspects of Phelan's and Auslander's works. Performance studies scholar Jennifer Parker-Starbuck's *Cyborg Theatre* (2011), for instance, adopts a flexible stance of using "live," as Phelan does, to mean "a bodily presence capable of resisting the onslaught of commercial capitalism" as well as something that is already mediatized "in the contemporary moment of globalized technology."[20]—a view that has been emphasized repeatedly by Auslander. If Parker-Starbuck took an intermediary position, then Dixon proposes a third paradigm ("presence") as a way to rethink liveness with a particular emphasis placed on the degree to which spectators pay attention to the events unfolding in front of their eyes, whether it be events involving "the presence of live bodies" or "media image."[21] Presence as a central claim to liveness here acquires a qualitative dimension by taking into account the intensity of audience engagement. But missing in this perspective are the auratic effect the performers' material bodies can have upon spectators and the fact that the distinction between the bodies of performers and spectators often collapse in performance art, as most prominently showcased in Marina Abramovic's works where audience participation becomes the very premise of performance; *Rhythym 0* (1974) and *The Artist is Present* (2010) being two distinctive examples of such collapse.

Liveness as a Medium-Specific Concept

As can be gleaned from the previous section, the concept of liveness is relevant to various media formats while its precise articulation is pertinent to the specificity of the media being investigated. Depending on whether the debate concerns live stage performance, durational performance art, music concerts, film, radio, and television broadcasting, and/or the interactive new media, its implications are bound to vary.

While Phelan was mainly concerned with performance art as a site of bodily

endurance and resistance, Auslander's primary medium of inquiry was the music industry. Auslander insists that "the history of live performance is thus bound up with the history of recording media, and extends over no more than the past 100 to 150 years."[22] Prior to the invention of gramophones, the production and consumption of music happened simultaneously, as the performers and listeners had to be in the same place at the same time. Music was heard as it was produced, but when recording technology became available, music was reduced to the sonic sphere, giving rise to anxiety over the authenticity of the recordings; after all, how do we know who is really performing the music just by listening to it? But with the resurgence of multimedia and digital performance, the performance of music once again claimed a visual dimension, with much emphasis placed on music videos and live stage performances as a focal point of "seeing" music. Of all genres, pop music in the age of YouTube, in particular, became a synaesthetic playing field where audio and visuals became forever married. The slippery division between audio and visual equally applies to the conceptual borderline between live and mediatized.

Auslander further observes that the invention of gramophones and films did not raise any questions about the division between live and mediatized, as listening to live concert music cannot be confused with listening to a recording of the concert. But with the advent of radio and television, the distinction became fuzzier, as both media, at least in their nascent stage, established themselves as live.[23] Therefore, live and mediatized became not only permutable modes of performance but also, in some instances, nearly indistinguishable.

Auslander's position is highly debatable in terms of whether reproduction of sound and images on gramophones and films can so clearly be separated from the live delivery—just think of performances by Wooster Group or Taiwan's Cloud Gate Dance Theater, which use film on the live performance stage, not to mention the practice of lip synching on stage. Nonetheless, Auslander's observation points to the fissure between temporal and spatial coexistence in the age of media technology. Live, with the advent of audio-visual recording technology, became synonymous with "real time," whereas concern about co-presence in space diminished.

The reversal of this "real time" liveness can be found in movie theaters: before the age of home videos and computer streaming, which enabled domestic consumption of the genre, film spectators had to congregate in theaters, and they still choose to do so. This mode of film consumption required audiences to be co-present in the same space, while a conspicuous gap between the time of filmic action and the time of film viewing persisted. For the lack of a better expression, the early mode of film consumption in theaters generated a mode of "real space" liveness.

Moreover, film's ability to capture and permanently reproduce ephemeral performance gave the genre a special place in the liveness debate. Cinema was a fully established genre when Walter Benjamin's seminal essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" appeared in 1937; the essay forecast, among other things, the inevitable changes in auratic art, including live performance, upon the encroachment of the irreversible tide of reproducible technology. Other pioneering works in film and media scholarship, such as Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) and Gene Youngblood's *Expanded Cinema* (1970), also interrogated the implications of mass media and

video art in reconfiguring the ontology of live performances. Auslander would go further to proclaim a death sentence for live theater: "Indeed film had thoroughly routed the theatre by 1926, so there was little left to pillage when television arrived in force some twenty years later."[24] Auslander then segues into the affinities between live theater and the early television medium, emphasizing "the way in which the essence of the televisual was understood, from television's earliest appearances, as an ontology of liveness more akin to the ontology of theater than to ontology of film. Television's essence was seen in its ability to transmit events as they occur, not in a filmic capacity to record events for later viewing."[25] TV scholar Rhona Berenstein would rephrase the same idea by claiming that TV's most important and unique qualities are "liveness and immediacy,"[26] the attributes that would often be associated with live theater. Blom would fine tune this thought further by proposing that rather than a medium of immediacy itself, TV is a medium to craft the verisimilitude of immediacy: "[I]n contrast to film and photography, television (with its live events and real time emanation) does not transmit images or representation, but offers only the semblance of presentation as such."[27] For Blom, television's ability to simulate the impressions of immediacy placed the medium as a fine material for video artists such as Nam June Paik to realize "a new kind of tactility" [28] that cuts across multiple time and space planes.

On the other hand, Jane Feuer's seminal article, "The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology" (1983), defines the "live" in opposition to that which is "recorded." Feuer was concerned with the ideology of television as a specific technology; she was more interested in looking into the medium as a forum where crucial social interactions take place rather than the ways in which other types of ideology (political, commercial) might be transmitted through the medium.[29] For Feuer, recorded performance loses the "spontaneity" as well as the "uninterrupted flow of energy from performer to audience" via their "direct contact to each other."[30] As if foreshadowing Phelan's thesis a decade later, the concept of "spontaneity"[31] in Feuer's work is drawn from the unpredictable nature of a living organism. The qualities of immediacy, flexibility, impulsivity, instinct, dynamism, and even ephemerality are called forth as pivotal to sustain the implications of "liveness" in her work.

Hence, expressions such as "live broadcasts" and "recorded live" are not considered oxymoronic in the parlance of television studies. Both terms reflect how television was initially conceived as a prime venue for live broadcasting. As Jérôme Bourdon argues, television remains deeply influenced by the possibility of live broadcasting despite the fact that its golden age (the 1950s in the United States and western Europe) has long been over.[32] For this reason, television studies turned out to be, and remains, a productive site where debate on liveness persists, especially with regard to its formative role in the sociology of spectatorship.

Such a fertile discussion on liveness in television studies invited counter-arguments: for instance, media studies scholar John Caldwell critiqued an overwhelming emphasis on liveness—or what he termed "liveness myth" or "myth of newness"[33]—and called for a more broader consideration of TV aesthetics in the analysis of television productions. But his criticism, if anything at all, evidences how the discussion on liveness is so central to the field.

The necessary condition for televisual liveness, which is built on the temporal coincidence of performers and spectators who do not coexist spatially, is also a

typical marker of liveness in the age of digital media. Media studies scholar Nick Couldry, in tracing the evolution of mobile media, engaged extensively with the concept of liveness or live transmission, as an interactive mode that "guarantees a potential connection to shared social realities as they are happening."[34] In his essay "Liveness, 'Reality' and the Mediated Habitus from Television to the Mobile Phone" (2004), Couldry suggests that the significance of Feuer's work lies not so much in her continued use of the term "ideology" as in "whether 'liveness' (as applied to television and other media) is purely a descriptive term, whose usefulness depends on matters of fact, or whether it is, in Durkheim's sense, a 'category'—a term whose use depends on its place within a wider system, or structured pattern, of values, which work to reproduce our belief in, and assent to, something."[35] He concludes that the implications of liveness are much broader than the descriptions of the term itself, since the notion of liveness concerns "media's role as a central institution for representing social 'reality.'"[36] His main contribution is that he regards the social interaction surrounding liveness in Feuer's work as implying functions of social ritual. Ritual, as Couldry argues, "is a category put to use in various forms of structured action that naturalize wider power relationships,"[37] and "there are many forms of ritualized practice in relation to media."[38] With this thesis put forth, liveness entered the realm of power to command the organization of social interactions.

Couldry's view is particularly true as media continue to develop and propagate in complicated ways along entangled social networks. Feuer was primarily concerned with television as a medium to explicate the notion of liveness as a mode of social interaction; Couldry wrote at the dawn of the new millennium, when transmedia practices had developed in unprecedentedly globalized ways. Broadcast television, which enabled real time liveness through which a critical mass shared a notion of imagined community, has become increasingly fragmented by modes of narrowcasting and microcasting (instead of depending on network or cable stations' programming, consumers can choose the precise time and mode of what they want to watch). As a result, the unity of time has been dismantled: not only has the time between production and consumption become misaligned, but also the unified time of consumption has become disseminated into multiple times. In short, with the advent of microcasting, there were as many time zones of consumption as there were consumers. Yet with the increasing relevance of new media in daily life, live interactions between spectators and performers as well as fans and stars are multiplying and intensifying in unprecedented ways.

One of the most prominent changes brought by transmedial practice is that the traditional distinctions among media platforms—theater, music concerts, TV, film, video art, and online social media interactions—are becoming less and less meaningful. For instance, the stage designs by Es Devlin often use elements of visual art installation for large commercial music concerts. Of course, the fluid convergence of media—such as a video art installation on the multimedia theater stage or a TV drama production's emulation of the live stage—existed prior to the age of transmedia, but what distinguishes this age from its precursors is the ways computing devices can create an interface between producers and consumers of performance frequently and intensely, so as to generate a new paradigm of liveness. In the age of social media, a recorded live theater piece or a film clip can facilitate online sharing and enable a broad wave of ongoing participation from spectators, rendering the time lapse between production and consumption meaningless. If live stage performance without the intervention of digital

technology was a medium insistent upon the temporal and spatial co-presence of audience and performers, then the broadcast medium of television, with its capacity to produce a unique brand of liveness through “live broadcasting” and “recorded live,” eliminated spatial co-presence as a necessary requirement of constructing liveness. With the advent of social media, co-presence in time became an elective component rather than a prerequisite. In fact, manipulating time through generating virtual impressions of synchronized time is a typical strategy of mixed-reality performance, where novel ways to capture and even re-create performances “as if live”[39] abound.

It is under these particular circumstances that Couldry presents the new paradigms of “online liveness” and “group liveness” as flexible ways to think about the meaning of liveness in the age of digital media. According to Couldry, online liveness concerns the consumers of and participants in the media more than those who are conventionally identified as producers: “Social co-presence on a variety of scales from very small groups in chatrooms to huge international audience for breaking news on major websites.”[40] Embedded in “online liveness,” as Couldry defines it, is the importance of scale, from which the notion of the social is drawn.

“Group liveness,” by contrast, as defined by Couldry, indicates “the ‘liveness’ of a mobile group of friends who are in continuous contact via their mobile phones through calls and texting. . . . It enables individuals and groups to be continuously co-present to each other even as they move independently across space.”[41] It points to the indexical relations between offline community and online community in the sense that the existence of the former is a necessary condition for the latter to emerge. Although this category of liveness has its valence in describing certain social interactions, such as various actual communities in the real world extending their engagement with one another in cyberspace, the reverse is also true, that live interaction can start virtually online to create actual communities in real space.

All in all, Couldry’s position on the ritualistic collectivity of liveness projects the notion not as a natural given, but as a highly constructed term whose significance rests on a spectrum of ideas more than on technological fact: “that we gain access through liveness to something broader, ‘central,’ significance, which is worth accessing now, not later; that ‘we’ who gain live access is not random, but a representative social group; that the media is the privileged means for obtaining that access.”[42] By projecting the elements of the social as its primary concern while instrumentalizing its technological aspects, Couldry sees liveness as a mediated habitus—a claim that counters technically driven articulations.

The Future of Liveness

We live in an era when the impossible technology of the future has already been imagined and projected in visual performance so thoroughly that when that technology enters the realm of everyday reality, we experience less shock. One of the popular introductions of the hologram as a future technology was in the first installment of the *Star Wars* film series, *A New Hope* (1977), in which R2-D2 projected a small holographic image of Princess Leia to Luke Skywalker in her plea to save the Rebel Alliance. The scene provided the first well-known instance of what it would be like to communicate with a 3-D projection. But only in the second

decade of the new millennium did hologram technology started to gain mainstream attention and everyday application: in 2010, IBM listed the hologram among its "Next Five in Five," highlighting five rising technologies that would create differences in our lives in the following five years. In 2015—the last year in the span of IBM's projection—the world had yet to see widespread everyday usage of hologram technology. In a similar vein, the film *Matrix* in 1999 presented a world in which the real is imbricated in the virtual, yet only in the mid-2010s is virtual reality beginning to be mass marketed in the parts of the world where digital consumerism prevails.

Technologies of the future—hologram, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR),[43] immersive visualization; navigable cinematic systems; and interactive narrative—are already interfering with live performance in unprecedented ways. They complicate the phenomenology of performance by disturbing the perception of time and space. Technology helps to manipulate a semblance of synchronicity among diachronically dispersed subjects. The much-talked-about resurrection of Elvis Presley in hologram projection via rotoscoping technology to sing next to Celine Dion on the 2007 *American Idol* stage, and that of the late rapper Tupac Shakur, who was shown on stage as a hologram with Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre during the 2012 Coachella Music Festival, are two prominent examples. In the United Kingdom, there is even a TV show called *Impossible Duet* in which stars can sing along with their favorite idols from previous generations, making an appearance on stage as holograms.

As these examples evidence, the interface between the virtual performer and the live audience can easily be created with the assistance of technology, putting into question whether virtual human presence should be disqualified as an agent of liveness. In 2011, Italian composer Franco Battiato relied on virtual presentation of singers via hologram to stage his new opera dedicated to the 16th-century philosopher Bernardino Telesio. In a form known as "Telesio" lyric opera, the production featured live orchestra music while the acting and dancing on stage were done by holographic projections.[44] Similarly, an animated cyber celebrity by the name of Hastune Miku leads the trend of virtual presence, performing in sold-out 3-D concerts worldwide, in Los Angeles, Taipei, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Tokyo. A creation of the Hokkaido-based firm Crypton Future Media, she debuted in 2007 as a vocaloid, eventually assuming a corporeal form of a sixteen-year-old girl with two voluptuous turquoise pigtails in the 3-D projection on stage. Can a body without organs, like that of Hatsune Miku, participate in the construction of liveness after all?

Performances by Telesio lyric opera and Hastune Miku are extensions of what Gabriella Giannachi terms "virtual theatres," which often incorporate cybernetics and hypertextuality into their performance matrix. Giannachi notes that in virtual theaters, "both the work of art and the viewer are mediated"[45]—which claims that the virtual mode of performance has moved away almost entirely from various trajectories of liveness. The trend toward virtuality and cybernetics is growing, as evidenced by the performances of Jeffrey Shaw, Lynn Hershmann, the British company Compicité, the Australian company Version1.0, and interactive digital media theater and dance companies Dumb Type and Troika Ranch.

Aided by ever transforming technologies, performances like these will most likely challenge the meaning of sociality as embedded in the ideological and affective underpinnings of human interaction. In the new millennium, there is increasing

attention paid to critical works on how the notion of liveness is not exclusively reserved to describe the interface between human and human, or human and other living organisms, but also applicable to human and nonhuman actors. For instance, in her research on the interface between humans and computers, Margaret Morse wrote that feedback that can be generated instantaneously by computers, in the broadest sense, "is a capacity of a machine to signal or seem to respond to input instantaneously. A machine that thus 'interacts' with the user even at this minimal level can produce a feeling of 'liveness' and a sense of the machine's agency and—because it exchanges symbols—even of a subjective encounter with a persona."[46]

If Morse was concerned with the everyday interaction between humans and computers as a mode to produce interactive liveness, the mediated technologies found in the aforementioned companies' works challenge the live performances' claim for immediate presence as the foundation of the social to emerge, and there will always be a debate on whether the notion of liveness is exclusive to the human subjectivity. And yet, despite the fact that the performance stage of the future will increasingly be augmented with awe-inspiring technologies, there will always be a real-time event where living human bodies will congregate in the old-fashioned way—as has been the case as long as humanity has been in existence.

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Notes

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3. Daniel Sack brings the liveness debate back to the existential concern: “Instead of presuming a stable ontological essence, then, how might live performance intervene as an expansion and troubling of what we mean by living in this new millennium, and who or what gets considered temporally and vitally live? This requires that we open our understanding of liveness to include some of its other connotations, to accentuate its sense of ‘aliveness’ or ‘liveness.’” Daniel Sack, *After Live: Possibility, Potentiality, and the Future of Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 12.

4. Matthew Causey, “Screen Test of the Double: The Uncanny Performer in the Space of Technology,” *Theatre Journal* 51.4 (December 1999): 387.

5. Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 46.

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7. Auslander, *Liveness*, 62.

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30. Ibid., 1–2.

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32. Jérôme Bourdon, “Live Television Is Still Alive: On Television as Unfulfilled Promise,” *Media, Culture, and Society* 22 (2000): 531.

33. John Thorton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis, and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), 30.

34. Nick Couldry, “Liveness, ‘Reality’ and the Mediated Habitus from Television to the Mobile Phone,” *Communications Review* 7.4 (2004): 355.

35. Ibid., 354.

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38. Ibid., 354.

39. Steve Benford and Gabrielle Giannachi, *Performing Mixed Reality* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 71.

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41. Ibid., 357.

42. Ibid., 356.

43. Hologram technology does not require special devices to fully access its three-dimensionality. Virtual reality requires special gadgets for a full 3-D effect, such as goggles and gloves to enhance visual and tactile sensory systems. It is a kind of technology that depends on user interface with the software. Interactive reality is differentiated from VR by its reliance on "overlap" of real and virtual images to create a seamless field of vision.

44. "Christie Projectors Make The First Holographic Opera A Reality," Christie Digital Systems, Inc.

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46. Margaret Morse, *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 15.

Related Articles

Nation and Ethnicity in American Performance and Theater

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Brian Winston, a historian of media technologies, suggests that several factors have to be in place for a new medium to develop. These include ideation (the imagination of a new technology to serve a specific purpose) and the maturation of the science needed to produce it. The default definition of live performance is that it is the kind of performance in which the performers and the audience are both physically and temporally co-present to one another. But over time, we have come to use the word live to describe performance situations that do not meet these basic conditions. In the case of interactive technologies, the claim to liveness can be concretized in a. variety of demands. In media studies, mass communication, media psychology, communication theory, and sociology, media influence and media effects are topics relating to mass media and media culture's effects on individual or an audience's thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. Whether it is written, televised, or spoken, mass media reaches a large audience. Mass media's role and effect in shaping modern culture are central issues for study of culture.