

**Framing Effects:
The Impact of Framing on Copresence
in Virtual Theatre**

by

Benjamin Asher Unterman

B.A., University of Ottawa, 2000

M.A., University of Alberta, 2005

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the

School of Interactive Arts and Technology
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

© **Benjamin Asher Unterman 2017**

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Spring 2017

All rights reserved.

However, in accordance with the *Copyright Act of Canada*, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for Fair Dealing. Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, education, satire, parody, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.

Approval

Name: Benjamin Asher Unterman
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Title: *Framing Effects:
The Impact of Framing on Copresence in
Virtual Theatre*
Examining Committee: **Chair:** Lyn Bartram
Associate Professor

Thecla Schiphorst
Senior Supervisor
Professor

Bernhard Riecke
Supervisor
Professor

Steve DiPaola
Internal Examiner
Professor
School of Interactive Arts and Technology
Simon Fraser University

Maria Chatzichristodoulou
External Examiner
Associate Professor
Performance and New Media
London South Bank University

Date Defended:

January 19, 2017

Ethics Statement



The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

- a. human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics

or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

or has conducted the research

- c. as a co-investigator, collaborator, or research assistant in a research project approved in advance.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed with the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada

Update Spring 2016

Abstract

Virtual theatre (enacted dramatic narrative performed live online) is an emerging form of theatrical mediation. One of the biggest challenges faced by this growing media practice is the management of audience experience. This thesis attempts to address the uncertainty around virtual theatre audiences by focusing on the framing of performances that take place in virtual worlds. Strategic approaches to framing and audience preparation are suggested based on literature-based research, case studies and experimental approaches to understanding the role of context and information to audience experience.

The core research of the thesis involves a mixed-methods approach to understanding the impact of framing on virtual theatre. The first phase is theoretical, using existing theories of framing drawn from many disciplines in order to create analytical framework to establish the functional features of audience preparation. This framework is then used to analyse the audience preparation strategies of three Vancouver-based live art companies using both interviews and document analysis. Finally, framing strategies from both stage theatre and commercial cinema are used to create framing conditions that are tested using a controlled experiment on a virtual theatre production.

The research findings are the basis of a series of recommendations for theatrical events presented in various media. The consequences for virtual theatre are emphasised in an attempt to expand the scope of this emerging form of theatrical expression.

Keywords: Virtual Theatre; Framing; Copresence; Audience; Theatre; Mediation

This thesis is dedicated to Louis, my source of inspiration and motivation throughout this journey.

Acknowledgements

I want first of all to thank Professors Thecla Schiphorst and Bernhard Riecke, without whose supervision this thesis would not have been possible. Thecla's advice and rigorous creativity were instrumental in integrating the diverse perspectives and research approaches that this thesis required. Bernhard's insistence on experimental rigour and openness to my artistic experimentation have made this document much more effective.

I also want to thank my many colleagues at SIAT for the many things you have taught me during my time here. So many of the best ideas in this thesis have emerged from the conversations we have had in passing, and I am forever grateful for your perspectives. I want to single out the members of our impromptu thesis writing group, Natalie Funk and Michal Nixon, whose support has made the writing process so much easier.

This research would also not have been possible without the creative team behind *The Forgotten Sentry*. This virtual theatre production was directed for the thesis by DC Spensley based on a script written by Nena St. Louis. The show would not have been complete without the Second Life acting of Milton Lim, wytchwhisper and buffy. The voices of the characters were brought to life by Richard Wolfe, Deena Easton, Sasha Cripton-Inglis, Louis Unterman & Nikki Inglis. Without all of these tremendously creative people, none of this would have been possible.

Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank my parents, David & Kathy, my son, Louis, and my fiancée Doris, for their incredible support and patience throughout this crazy adventure.

Table of Contents

Approval.....	ii
Ethics Statement.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Dedication.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Figures.....	xi
Chapter 1. Exploring Framing in Virtual Theatre.....	1
1.1 Defining Virtual Theatre.....	2
1.2 A brief history of virtual theatre.....	5
1.2.1 Chatroom performances.....	5
1.2.2 Virtual World Performances.....	6
1.2.3 Video Game Performances.....	7
1.2.4 Webcam Performances.....	8
1.2.5 Virtual Theatre.....	8
1.3 Theatricality & Copresence.....	9
1.4 Framing and Copresence in Virtual Theatre.....	11
1.5 Framing Virtual Theatre.....	14
Chapter 2. Theatrical Mediations.....	15
2.1 Theatre as medium.....	17
2.1.1 Understanding Medium.....	18
2.1.2 Theatricality and Mediation.....	19
2.2 Toward a Taxonomy of Theatrical Mediations.....	24
2.2.1 Character Mediation: Character Embodiment and Narrative Salience.....	27
2.2.2 Audience Reception: The relationship between audience and performer.....	31
2.3 Distinguishing features of theatrical mediations.....	38
2.3.1 Spatial Proximity.....	41
2.3.2 Live Presentation.....	44
2.3.3 Mode of Embodiment.....	49
2.4 Virtual Theatre Applications.....	51
2.5 Understanding Theatrical Mediations.....	57
Chapter 3. Copresence Effects.....	59
3.1 Defining copresence.....	61
3.1.1 Media studies copresence terminology.....	62
3.1.2 Theatrical copresence terminology.....	65
3.1.3 Copresence as unifying term.....	67
3.2 Studies of Mediated Copresence.....	67
3.2.1 Media studies approaches to copresence.....	68
3.2.2 Theatre studies approaches to copresence.....	73

3.3 Copresence Effects	77
3.3.1 Copresence effects and theatrical mediation	81
3.3.2 Copresence effects and the book problem	83
3.4 Studying Copresence Effects: Research Implications	87
Chapter 4. A Mixed-Methods Approach to Studying Framing	90
4.1 Chapter 5: Framing Theatrical Mediations	91
4.2 Chapter 6: Case Studies in Theatrical Framing	93
4.3 Chapters 7 & 8: Virtual Theatre Framing Experiment	96
Chapter 5. Framing Theatrical Mediations	99
5.1 Framing Public Theatrical Mediations	101
5.2 Framing Private Theatrical Mediations	105
5.3 Cognitive Perspectives on Theatrical Framing	109
5.4 Strategizing Framing	114
5.4.1 Semantic priming	115
5.4.2 Contextual Framing	120
5.5 Frame Analysis.....	123
Chapter 6. Case Studies in Theatrical Framing	126
6.1 Case 1: Touchstone Theatre	130
6.1.1 Advertising and Publicity	131
6.1.2 Reviews and Social Media	138
6.1.3 Location-based framing	141
6.2 Case 2: PuSh International Performing Arts Festival	144
6.2.1 Advertising and Publicity	145
6.2.2 Reviews and Social Media	152
6.2.3 Location-based Priming	155
6.3 Case 3: Music on Main	157
6.3.1 Advertising and Publicity	158
6.3.2 Reviews and Social Media	163
6.3.3 Location-based Priming	165
6.4 Framing Practises in Stage Performance.....	167
6.4.1 Semantic Priming.....	170
6.4.1.1 Content priming.....	171
6.4.1.2 Thematic priming.....	172
6.4.2 Contextual framing	174
6.5 Researching Theatrical Framing	175
Chapter 7. Experimental Framing Conditions.....	178
7.1 Establishing Framing Conditions	179
7.2 Artistic Framing Condition	181
7.2.1 E-mail Communication.....	184
7.2.2 Website Design	186
7.2.3 Second Life Waiting Area	189
7.3 Entertainment Framing Condition	190

7.3.1 E-mail Communication.....	193
7.3.2 Website Design.....	195
7.3.3 Second Life Waiting Area	198
7.4 Experiment Framing Condition	199
7.4.1 E-mail Communication.....	199
7.4.2 Website Design.....	201
7.4.3 Second Life Waiting Area	203
7.5 Framing Conditions Overview.....	204
Chapter 8. Virtual Theatre Framing Experiment	206
8.1 The Forgotten Sentry.....	209
8.2 Experimental Methodology	211
8.2.1 Participants.....	211
8.2.2 Data Gathering	211
8.2.2.1 Copresence Questionnaire	211
8.2.2.2 Interviews	213
8.2.3 Procedure	214
8.3 Results	217
8.3.1 Questionnaire results	217
8.3.2 Interview results.....	225
8.3.2.1 Performance Website	225
8.3.2.2 Liveness and Immediacy	227
8.3.2.3 Interaction and Involvement.....	228
8.4 Discussion.....	230
8.4.1 Experimental Hypotheses	231
8.4.2 Actors and Characters	232
8.4.3 Semantic Priming.....	233
8.4.4 Prior Experience as Frame	236
8.5 Conclusions and Future Research.....	239
Chapter 9. Theorizing Framing and Copresence Effects in Virtual Theatre	243
9.1 Elements of Framing Theatrical Mediations.....	244
9.1.1 Semantic priming: Thematic Priming.....	245
9.1.2 Semantic Priming: Content Priming	248
9.1.3 Contextual Framing: Cognitive Triggers.....	250
9.1.4 Contextual Framing: Cultural Value	255
9.2 Framing and Copresence Effects in Theatrical Mediation.....	258
Chapter 10. Thesis Scope and New Research Directions.....	262
10.1 Stage Theatre Case Studies.....	262
10.2 Experimental Framing Conditions.....	264
10.3 Experimental Questionnaire	266
10.4 Future Research Directions	268
Chapter 11. Framing Strategies for Virtual Theatre.....	270
11.1 Online content: websites and publicity	271

11.2 Pre-show Experience	274
11.2.1 Pre-show experience for web-based virtual theatre	275
11.2.1.1 Framing the performance space	275
11.2.1.2 Presentation of the performance space	278
11.2.2 Pre-show experience in virtual worlds	281
11.2.2.1 Framing the performance space	282
11.3 Framing Virtual Theatre	286
References	289

List of Figures

Figure 1: Research Phases	11
Figure 2: Analytical structure - theatrical mediation	25
Figure 3: Impact of the features of theatrical mediations	53
Figure 4: Late Company Web Page (http://www.touchstonetheatre.com/productions/late-company/ , retrieved April 27, 2015)	133
Figure 5: Late Company Poster (Touchstone Theatre, 2014)	135
Figure 6: Late Company Postcard (Back)	136
Figure 7: Late Company Postcard (Front)	136
Figure 8: PuSh Festival 2015 Poster	146
Figure 9: PuSh Festival online banner ad	150
Figure 10: PuSh Festival Ad - Georgia Straight, January 26, 2015	151
Figure 11: Music for the Winter Solstice (Part 1), Music on Main website (retrieved from http://www.musiconmain.ca/concerts/music-for-the-winter-solstice/ , May 26, 2015)	160
Figure 12: Music for the Winter Solstice (Part 1), Music on Main website (retrieved from http://www.musiconmain.ca/concerts/music-for-the-winter-solstice/ , May 26, 2015)	161
Figure 13: Music for the Winter Solstice postcard. Front (left) & Back (right). Music on Main, 2014.	162
Figure 14: Experimental Framing Condition Summary	181
Figure 15: Art condition web page at Pi Theatre	188
Figure 16: Entertainment condition website (theforgottensentry.com), Synopsis page	196
Figure 17: Entertainment condition website (theforgottensentry.com) Gallery page	197
Figure 18: Experiment condition web page at SFU	202
Figure 19: GENIE Virtual Genetics Lab (McElhinney, 2010)	203
Figure 21: Experimental Procedure	215
Figure 23: Others' Copresence Results (Character vs. Performer)	223
Figure 24: Characters' Copresence & Performers' Copresence	224

Chapter 1.

Exploring Framing in Virtual Theatre

Virtual theatre is an emerging form of theatrical expression which uses live online communication tools to mediate enacted narrative. Its emerging aesthetic conventions draw on various forms of digital art as well as theatrical writing and presentation strategies. Establishing and maintaining audiences is very challenging for virtual theatre, as it is

for any new art form. In this thesis, I present virtual theatre in the context of other forms of theatrical performance. My analysis of the audience context in virtual theatre is based on the concepts of framing and copresence.

Framing refers to those contextual and informational elements which surround an event or object and which influence the ways in which the event is perceived. This term has its roots in Goffman's Frame Analysis (1974), and has been used extensively as a way of understanding the behaviour (Esslin, 1991) and interpretations (McConachie & Hart, 2006; Gray, 2010) of theatre and film audiences. Framing for theatre and film uses many different approaches, including advertising, theatre design, title sequences and pre-show announcements. Specific framing techniques used in stage theatre, film, narrative video games and other forms of theatrical mediation form the basis of strategic suggestions that aim to reinforce copresence effects and enhance audience experience in virtual theatre.

Chapter Contents

- 1.1 Defining Virtual Theatre
- 1.2 A brief history of virtual theatre
 - 1.2.1 Chatroom performances
 - 1.2.2 Virtual World Performances
 - 1.2.3 Video Game Performances
 - 1.2.4 Webcam Performances
 - 1.2.5 Virtual Theatre
- 1.3 Theatricality & Copresence
- 1.4 Framing and Copresence in Virtual Theatre
- 1.5 Framing Virtual Theatre

Copresence also has its roots in the writing of Erving Goffman, who defines copresence as the feeling that “the other is ‘within range’” (1963, p. 17). When the conditions for copresence are met, people become “uniquely accessible, available and subject to one another” (Goffman, 1963, p. 22), a condition that is very similar to the idea of stage presence in a theatrical context (Power, 2008). The concept of copresence has also been applied to the study of interpersonal relationships in digital space (e.g. Nowak & Biocca, 2003). As virtual theatre draws on both theatrical traditions and mediated communication, the concept of copresence provides an analytical lens through which audience involvement in virtual theatre can be understood.

While both framing and copresence are important elements of theatrical representation, the interplay between these two concepts in a theatrical context is not well understood. I approach the analysis of framing and copresence in this thesis using a variety of methodological approaches. The literature review for this thesis is broken up into two chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the relationship between theatre and mediation, which identifies spatial proximity, live presentation and the mode of embodiment as the primary means of distinguishing between theatrical media. Chapter 3 evaluates the challenges in studying copresence from stage theatre and media studies, proposing the idea of “copresence effects” as a way of bridging the gap between these fields. Because of the prevalence of questionnaire-based studies in the field of mediated presence research, an experiment designed to test the impact of framing on virtual theatre performance. This process begins with a strategic evaluation of framing based on literature from theatre, film and cognitive science (Chapter 5). The information from this literature and examples from theatre and film will be used to create framing conditions for the experimental phase, described in Chapter 6. The experiment itself (Chapters 7 & 8) will test the impact of conventional framing strategies on a virtual theatre performance. The results produced by the theoretical and experimental results will allow for an evaluation of the impact of framing on audiences presented in Chapters 9 & 10.

1.1 Defining Virtual Theatre

The intersection of digital technology and theatrical performance is home to a broad range of creative forms. This diversity makes focused theoretical analysis difficult,

as the conditions of production, distribution and reception of potential examples are often very different. The diversity of this field is highlighted by Dixon (2007), who divides digital performance into categories which highlight not only the ways in which digital projections are integrated on stage, but also explores narrative VR environments, telematic performances, robotics and live online performance. Other theorists who approach the confluence of digital technology and performance (Giannachi, 2004; Causey, 2007; Salter, 2010) present a similar diversity of examples, terms and definitions.

With the diversity of media practices surrounding theatrical performance, it is no surprise that many examples of digital performance combine different artistic and technological traditions, creating unique multimedia or transmedia experiences. This creates uncertainty about the appropriate framework for analysis of these artworks, whether they are to be understood within the context of performances, art installations, new media art or some other category of artistic event (Causey, 2007).

Even with a research scope limited to those events which occur primarily online, we find a great number of terms, each with a slightly different emphasis and set of constraints (Unterman, 2005; Jamieson, 2008; Chatzichristodoulou, 2014). Many of these terms (such as Cyberformance or Networked Performance) include both digitally networked events as well as stage-based events that contain these networked elements. Works that occur entirely within networked digital environments have been referred to as Computer-Mediated Theatre (Unterman, 2005), Cyberspace Performance (Schrum, 2007), Theatre in Cyberspace (Dixon, 2007) and Hyperformance (Unterman, 2007). The choice to use “virtual theatre” as the preferred terminology in this thesis was made in order to avoid neologisms and complex descriptive phrases in referring to this kind of event.

The term “Virtual Theatre” has been used in several ways by different researchers, confounding its meaning somewhat. Generally, virtual theatre is used to describe live storytelling or enacted narrative that takes place entirely within digitally simulated environments (e.g. Springel, 1998; Adamo, Bertacchini, Bilotta, Pantano & Tavernise, 2010). In 2004, the term was expanded somewhat with the publication of Giannachi’s *Virtual Theatres*, which covers a very broad range of topics, including

everyday interactions in virtual worlds, and robotics. As Saltz points out, Giannachi's Virtual Theatre does not focus on the intersection of technology and theatre, focusing instead on the performativity of digital technology (2004). Subsequently, other writers have used "virtual theatre" as broadly as Giannachi, although other terms such as Digital Performance are also commonly used for this purpose. Definitions of virtual theatre have extended over time to include many important facets of the interaction of digital technology and theatrical expression. While these uses of "virtual theatre" provide important insights, they are too expansive the purposes of this PhD. As a result, a more restrictive use of the term "virtual theatre" has been chosen for this research.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term "Virtual Theatre" refers to a specific subset of the broader field of digital performance. This term was chosen because when each of the words are defined closely, a clear image of this restricted scope emerges. The term limits the scope of the thesis to those works which are "virtual," which is to say those events which are created, accessed and stored using computers. Focusing on works that are "virtual" also makes it clear that this thesis does not explore those works which employ augmented reality or mixed media strategies. It also specifically excludes stage theatre works that make use of digital projection or scenography.

The choice to use "theatre" rather than "performance" is likewise motivated by a desire to accurately describe the limitations in scope of this thesis. The primary concern was the distinction between "theatre," in which actors portray characters to advance a narrative, and "performance art," in which performers create an event that does not necessarily contain characters or narrative elements. As Feral notes, the specificity of theatre has become increasingly decentred, but the fundamental function (actors acting in order to portray a story) remains consistent despite changes to its aesthetic and production conditions changing (Feral, 2002). Avoiding talking about "performance" also allows us to avoid the confusion of linguistic uses of the term, in which everyday conversation is understood as performative. Focusing on enacted narrative also allows for a much more rigorous comparison of the impact that different forms of mediation have on theatrical expression (in particular in Chapter 2).

Defining “virtual theatre” focuses the scope of this thesis research on a subset of the larger world of digital performance. Focusing on those works of enacted narrative that are created and accessed digitally will allow for a much more detailed analysis within the scope of this thesis. The existing confusion in the digital performance nomenclature makes the establishment of “virtual theatre” of particular importance. In the end, defining “virtual theatre” in this limited way allows for a much clearer delimitation of this specialized subset of the wider field of digital performance.

Focusing on this narrow subset of digital performance allows for greater clarity in the final analysis of framing practice and strategy. First, it allows us to circumvent the necessary complexity of intermediated performances, where separate framing strategies are often used for the physical and digital elements of the performance. Second, it allows for the formulation of theoretical constructs that are tightly focused on a limited set of examples, allowing for deeper theorization of framing within the confines of a PhD thesis. Finally, a focus on the exclusively digital “virtual theatre,” reinforces the importance of cross-disciplinary research by relying in the term itself on specific disciplinary definitions of terms drawn from media studies and theatre studies.

1.2 A brief history of virtual theatre

To frame this thesis research, in particular due to the relative obscurity of virtual theatre, I want to provide some historical and artistic context. Virtual theatre performances are staged using digital communication technologies such as chat rooms, virtual worlds or multiplayer video games. A comprehensive history of virtual theatre would take much more space than I have here, but these examples should help provide some artistic and historical context for the analysis in this thesis.

1.2.1 Chatroom performances

The first virtual theatre performance took place in a text-only IRC chat room. Performed on December 12, 1993, *Hamnet* was an online adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* that made use of IRC slang and online communication contexts to create a

playful, humorous performance event (Danet, 2001). ASCII art sets provided a visual backdrop for the event (Danet, 2001).

Virtual theatre performances were also staged in visual chat rooms. Desktop Theater was founded in 1997 by Adriene Jenik and Lisa Brenneis, producing adaptations, improvisations and scripted performances using The Palace visual chat room (Jenik, 2001). In 2001, Avatar Body Collision also began using The Palace for virtual theatre performances which questioned the relationship between people and technology (Ptacek, 2003). The audiences for many of the performances in The Palace were not aware they were part of a performance, creating opportunities for discussion that extended beyond the performances themselves (Unterman, 2005). This focus on community connection and conversation was typical of early chatroom-based virtual theatre events.

UpStage is a graphical chat program that was purpose built for virtual theatre performances, and first went online in 2003 (Jamieson, 2008). UpStage continues to be updated and is currently one of the most active platforms for virtual theatre performances. Most performances using UpStage use linear narrative structures, but a number of experiments in live audience interactivity have started expanding the capabilities of the platform. My production of Murder2.0 in 2010, for example, presented a live multi-linear narrative based on audience selection of on-screen clues in a murder mystery. Further experiments with this platform have a lot of potential for expanding interactive narrative strategies in a live setting.

1.2.2 Virtual World Performances

There was also an early movement toward using text-only virtual worlds (MOOs) as a platform for virtual theatre performances. In 1996, ATHEMOO, a virtual world dedicated to theatrical research and virtual theatre performances came online. ATHEMOO contained a number of purpose-built theatres which use text to describe the lobby, theatre space and performances to audiences (Schweller, 1999). A number of innovative performances were created in ATHEMOO spaces, including MetaMOOphosis, which included a custom-designed space which allowed participants to become characters from Kafka's Metamorphosis in improvised scenes based on the

short story (Sacks, 1999). The performances in ATHEMOO were often experimental, attempting to test the boundaries of what could be accomplished in live text-only virtual spaces.

Virtual theatre performances have also occurred in 3D virtual worlds. The early VRML platform Digital Space Traveler was used for several performances, including my production of *The Gas Heart* in 2003. But the most common 3D virtual world platform for virtual theatre performance is Second Life, which has hosted a staggering range of virtual theatre performances. Various performance groups have created works based on ballet (Ballet Pixelle), stage theatre (SL Shakespeare Company & Avatar Repertory Theater) and performance art (Second Front), among many others. The performance that is used for the experimental portion of this thesis, *The Forgotten Sentry*, was produced using Second Life by established SL artist DC Spensley, leveraging many of Second Life's live interactive tools to create the virtual theatre performance. Performances in Second Life are very diverse and use a wide range of aesthetic and narrative strategies.

1.2.3 Video Game Performances

There have also been a number of virtual theatre performances using multi-player video game platforms. MMORPGs such as Everquest and World of Warcraft have seen virtual theatre performances staged for players within the game. Virtual theatre performances have also been staged in other multi-player games, using the varying affordances of the games for performative purposes.

Virtual theatre performances that use video games often comment on the games themselves or the social environment surrounding them. For one notable performance, *dead-in-iraq*, the creator, Joseph Delappe played the US Army's recruitment game America's Army, refusing to shoot and typing in the names of actual American service people killed in the Iraq war (Delappe, 2011). In 2012, I was part of the Super Art League for our performance *Occupy Metropolis*, which staged a super-hero protest inside the game DC Universe Online. These performances used the settings designed into the video games to comment on game culture, exploring the ways in which games could be used to send social messages.

1.2.4 Webcam Performances

This final category is perhaps the most complex one to define in terms of virtual theatre performance. I generally exclude live online video broadcasts from the category of virtual theatre because, while live, there is no immediate connection between the performers and the audience. Cases of live, interactive online broadcasts also exist which are difficult to categorize, including live Twitch videogame broadcasts (where the online audience can comment on and sometimes even direct gameplay) and live sex cams (where audiences can direct the performance). Arguments could certainly be made that both of these forms fit the strict definition of virtual theatre. However, as fully engaging with this argument would be tangential to this thesis, I want to focus instead on examples of webcam-based performances that fall more clearly into established artistic traditions.

Approaches to interactive webcam performances are highly varied. In 2001, Toni Sant created an online bed-in for peace, referencing John Lennon and Yoko Ono's 1969 protests (Sant, 2001). Participants around the world could join each other by webcam from their beds to talk about and meditate on world peace (Sant, 2001). A multi-user webcam performance platform, Waterwheel, was created by Suzon Fuks to perform virtual theatre events regarding the ecology and politics of water consumption (Fuks, 2016). Waterwheel hosted a number of webcam-based performances between 2011 and 2016 (Fuks, 2016). Live webcam platforms such as chatroulette have also been used, for example in Eva & Franco Mattes' 2010 performance No Fun (Mattes & Mattes, 2010). Webcam performances often explore the connections between people across the world, and the ways in which technology can connect people from different cultures.

1.2.5 Virtual Theatre

The platforms used to produce and distribute virtual theatre performances are as varied as the content of the performances. Because of this, it is at times difficult to find qualities or properties which unite all of these examples of virtual theatre performance. As the number of examples grows, it will likely become necessary to divide virtual theatre into smaller categories for more precise analysis.

The diversity of creative tools has also resulted in a number of different naming conventions becoming popular for virtual theatre performances. In my own writing, I have referred to this phenomenon as “computer-mediated theatre” (Unterman, 2005) and “hyperformance” (2007; 2008; 2009). Helen Varley Jamieson and other artists associated with the UpStage platform refer to their events as “cyberformance” (Jamieson, 2008). Performers from Second Front prefer the term “avatar theatre.” Joseph Delappe refers to his creations as “in-game performances” (Delappe, 2011). This diversity of naming conventions brings to mind the debates surrounding proprietary naming conventions in the early days of cinema.

For the purposes of this thesis, we will be limiting our definition of “virtual theatre” to those events which have the following three properties: they must be performed at the same time as they are perceived by the audience, they must be intended as artistic products by their creators and they must have a story that is acted out either by avatars or by human actors. Given the diversity of live performances, these constraints are somewhat artificial, but they will allow this research to stay focused on a narrower range of performances. This should allow for greater precision in the conclusions we are able to draw regarding virtual theatre.

1.3 Theatricality & Copresence

The chapters on theatrical mediation (Chapter 2) and copresence effects (Chapter 3) address theoretical issues which are foundational to this thesis. Chapter 2 questions the assumption that stage theatre is unmediated and placing in the context of other forms of mediated performance. Chapter 3 explores approaches to copresence from theatre and media studies, using insights to each to propose a model of copresence effects to reconcile the differences between the different approaches. In each case, the analysis uses a literature review from the fields in question to construct the theoretical basis of the thesis research.

The literature review focused on theatrical mediation (Chapter 2) draws on analysis of the theatrical event to illustrate its mediated nature. The evidence for this claim is drawn from semiological analyses of the theatrical event (e.g. Esslin, 1991;

Rozik, 2008), sociological or anthropological approaches to theatre (e.g. Schechner, 1988), and studies of theatrical reception (e.g. Blau, 1987). Once stage theatre is established as a medium, it is analysed in the context of other theatrical mediations, such as film or puppetry to understand the ways in which theatrical presentation changes across media. This chapter identifies three features of media which influence theatrical production: spatial proximity, live presentation and mode of embodiment. The impact of these features on theatrical mediations is analysed with the goal of understanding the properties of virtual theatre.

The literature review focused on copresence (Chapter 3) addresses assumptions about copresence from stage theatre and media studies. The presence of actors in stage theatre is analysed using a breakdown created by Cormac Power, who identifies three approaches to theatrical presence: making present, having presence and being-present (2008). There is significant definitional overlap between Power's three categories of theatrical presence and Goffman's definition of copresence, suggesting that the two concepts are closely linked. The conceptual overlap suggests that feelings of actors' copresence should also be possible in other theatrical mediations such as film, and analyses of empathy and presence in other theatrical media are used to corroborate this claim.

The chapter on copresence also explores mediated presence theories, in particular those tied to analyses of media properties such as screen resolution. Much of the research on mediated presence is based on quantitative experimental approaches to presence (e.g. Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). These studies almost all assume that media fidelity is directly correlated to our feelings of presence (Bracken & Botta, 2010), but close analysis problematizes many of these assumptions. Indeed many media theory models of copresence integrate an interpretive element to their definitions of copresence, even as they minimize its importance (e.g. Biocca, 2003). The findings of these studies consistently indicate that there is not a simple correlation between media fidelity and copresence, but these conclusions are almost always discarded in favour of other explanations.

As a way of integrating theatrical approaches (which emphasise imagination and empathy) and media approaches (which emphasise media fidelity), I introduce Josette Feral's concept of "presence effects" (Feral, 2012). Presence effects occur when artists create the impression in an audience that something fictional or illusory is real (Feral, 2012). This effect is created in the interplay between knowledge and perception, leveraging the simultaneous existence in the audience's mind of the real world and the fictional one (Feral, 2012). I propose that this model of presence is an accurate description of copresence in mediated environments, and the way in which the concept of copresence effects explains mediated phenomena presents a more accurate model of mediated copresence than that found in either theatre or media studies.

The comprehensive review of theatrical mediations and mediated copresence allows my analysis of framing in virtual theatre to draw on a large body of existing research that partially addresses the theoretical needs of this thesis. This literature lays the groundwork for the three research phases that explore the impact of framing on copresence.

1.4 Framing and Copresence in Virtual Theatre

In Frame Analysis, Goffman not only defines framing, but applies it to stage theatre (1974). Goffman identifies the creation of stage boundaries, design elements and various acting cues to illustrate how stage theatre separates itself from everyday perception (1974). Other theatre and film theorists (e.g. Esslin, 1991; Gray, 2010) have identified framing elements, including architectural cues and advertising as contributing to audience experience. But beyond simply pointing out elements that might

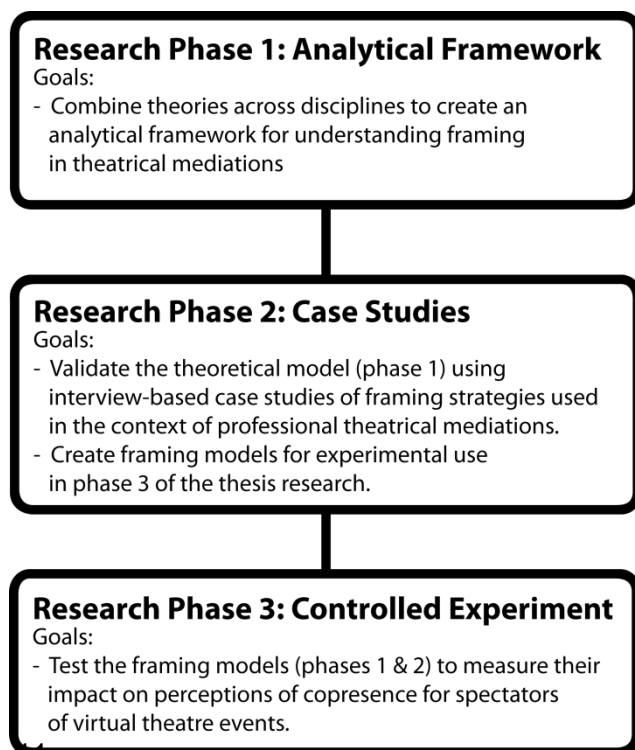


Figure 1: Research Phases

contribute to framing, there is very little evidence of the effectiveness of framing strategies or theories about how they work. This thesis aims to fill some of that gap in our knowledge of framing by approaching the thesis research in three distinct phases.

Chapter 5 involves the creation of an analytical framework to understand the effect that framing has on audiences for a range of theatrical mediations. This chapter uses evidence of framing strategies from public theatrical mediations (stage theatre, cinema) and private theatrical mediations (television, video games) in order to identify common framing strategies. Framing is also analysed through the lens of cognitive science. I use cognitive analyses of spectatorship and studies of advertising effectiveness to propose a cognitive model of framing. This model breaks down framing into two broad categories, each with two sub-categories:

1. Semantic priming: information used to reduce cognitive load
 - a. Content priming: narrative content presented to audiences (characters, plot elements, etc.)
 - b. Thematic priming: thematic information presented to audiences (theme, genre, identity of creators, etc.)
2. Contextual framing: contextual elements that help change audiences perceptual and analytical patterns
 - a. Liminal cues: indications of where the fictional world begins (stage or frame design, opening credits, etc.)
 - b. Social context: indications of the social importance of the event (behavioral conventions, involvement of fan communities, etc.)

Based on the cognitive functions of established framing practices, some preliminary strategic considerations for virtual theatre framing are formulated to be put in practice during the following phases of research.

Chapter 6 explores the framing practices of three different producers and presenters of live performance in Vancouver. These case studies were necessary because detailed descriptions of the strategic reasoning behind framing practices are not well represented in the literature. I conducted interviews with the employees responsible for framing at three local companies: Touchstone Theatre, The PuSh International

Performing Arts Festival and Music on Main. For each company, I determined the framing approaches they used and discussed the reasons for those decisions. I synthesised and analysed these approaches using the functional framework of framing defined in Chapter 5 to see how semantic priming and contextual framing were being used in a practical artistic setting. These findings created a better understanding of the strategic considerations in framing to be used in formulating approaches to framing for virtual theatre.

The observations of stage theatre framing from Chapter 6 are used alongside existing research in commercial cinema framing in order to create three experimental framing conditions described in Chapter 7. These conditions were created in order to test the ways in which semantic priming and contextual framing influence audience reactions to virtual theatre. Three framing conditions were created to be tested: Artistic Framing (based on stage theatre), Entertainment Framing (based on mainstream commercial film) and Experimental Framing (based on academic experimental design). Participants in each of these three conditions were provided with framing content using differently strategized e-mail messages, websites and virtual waiting areas.

Chapter 8 reports on exploratory experiment in virtual theatre framing conducted on a production called *The Forgotten Sentry* in Second Life. Participants were assigned to one of the three framing conditions outlined in Chapter 7. Participants in all three conditions watched the performance together, and filled out a copresence questionnaire adapted from Nowak & Biocca (2003). A small number of participants were also interviewed in the week following the performance to get additional information about their experiences. The results of the study show that, while the different forms of framing had no impact on the questionnaire data, in their interviews, participants spoke differently about their experience. In addition, both the survey data and the interviews suggest strongly that prior experiences play a very important role in framing virtual theatre events. While we were not left with statistically significant findings, this experience was very insightful when it comes to the formulation of more detailed framing strategies for virtual theatre performances.

1.5 Framing Virtual Theatre

The theoretical and practical research findings in this thesis increase our knowledge of framing strategies in the context of virtual theatres and other forms of mediated theatrical narrative. They allow the creation of detailed framing strategies based on good evidence from the literature as well as from case studies and direct experimental observation. My hope is that these lessons, applied to virtual theatre, will speed the expansion and artistic development of this emerging form of theatrical mediation.

Chapter 2.

Theatrical Mediations

Theatricality is an important concept across disciplines and has acquired meaning beyond simply referring to its theatrical roots. It is used as an aesthetic descriptor, Visual artists and film critics use theatricality to refer to aesthetic elements which break audience absorption – abstract minimalism for painting (Fried, 1998) or artificiality in film (Loiselle & Maron, 2012). Theatricality has also been used as an illustration of narrative meaning and user experience in the context of HCI and experience design

(Laurel, 1993). Indeed, the concept of theatricality is used in very different and often contradictory ways (Féral, 2002). Theatricality's relevance to so many fields of human endeavour is indicative of the conceptual flexibility of the theatrical event. Theatricality is used as a counterpoint to mediation in theatre studies (e.g. Phelan, 1993), film studies (e.g. Bazin, 2009; Loiselle & Maron, 2012) and media studies in general (e.g. Benjamin, 1986 [1936]). A closer exploration of theatrical creativity illustrates that the relationship between theatre and mediation is not oppositional. On the contrary, it is at the root of a deep understanding of the theatrical event. In this chapter, I argue that theatre is a form of mediation in its own right. Theatre's mediated nature makes it a useful analytical lens for comparative media research.

Chapter Contents

- 2.1 Theatre as medium
 - 2.1.1 Understanding Medium
 - 2.1.2 Theatricality and Mediation
- 2.2 Toward a Taxonomy of Theatrical Mediations
 - 2.2.1 Character Mediation
 - 2.2.2 Audience Reception
- 2.3 Distinguishing features of theatrical mediations
 - 2.3.1 Spatial Proximity
 - 2.3.2 Live Presentation
 - 2.3.3 Mode of Embodiment
- 2.4 Virtual Theatre Applications
- 2.5 Understanding Theatrical Mediations

In this chapter, I explore theatricality and its relationship to mediation, re-contextualizing stage theatre as one form of mediated theatrical expression among many. The analysis in this chapter is central to the overall thesis, explaining the validity of comparing theatrical artefacts across media platforms. Theatre, understood as a medium alongside film or video games, problematizes the assertion that these other forms of expression simply imitate the theatrical original. By defining theatricality as the presentation of narrative through embodied enactment, this framework shows that theatrical expression is affected by mediation and context. The tools of cross-media analysis are therefore central to our understanding of the role of mediation on theatrical narrative expression. Shifting toward an understanding of stage theatre as a form of mediation requires a detailed analysis of several approaches to theatricality.

In this chapter, I use two analytical lenses to conduct a comparative analysis of theatrical mediations. The first of analytical lenses focuses on character embodiment and the enactment of story as essential elements for creating theatrical narratives. The second analytical lens is audience reception, and the ways in which audience experience and behavioural conventions together impact our understanding of theatrical mediations. These two analytical lenses highlight allow me to identify and distinguish between forms of theatrical mediation. A coherent set of the features of different forms of theatrical mediation emerges from this analysis to lead toward a coherent and predictive model of theatrical mediations.

In section 2.3, I detail three distinguishing features of theatrical mediations: the proximal relationship between audience and performer, the liveness of the presentation and the mode of character embodiment. Analysis of these three areas reveals that each has a significant and specific impact on the effective presentation of theatrical narrative. Different models of spatial proximity affect the emotional and empathic connections between audience members and the characters in the story, requiring different strategies to increase audience involvement with the narrative. Differences in whether theatrical mediations are live or not – whether they are synchronous or asynchronous – are closely related to the flexibility of the audience's point of view. Finally, the decision to embody characters with human actors or with avatars standing in for the human body has a significant impact, especially on the degree of narrative and aesthetic abstraction

common in the form. An understanding of these three features of theatrical mediation provides an important analytical tool for understanding and comparing theatrical mediations.

The distinguishing features of theatrical mediations and the taxonomy of theatrical mediations that emerges from them can also be used predictively to explore the potential of virtual theatre. Each set of features provides us with a distinctive approach to narrative that would be expected of a type of theatrical mediation. These, in turn, can be compared to the emerging conventions of virtual theatre, allowing us to understand current practices in the wider context of theatrical mediation. In the final analysis, this re-framing of stage theatre as one form of theatrical mediation among many opens the door to many directions for future research.

2.1 Theatre as medium

The creation of a taxonomy of theatrical mediations relies on the assumption that stage theatre itself is mediated. In theatre studies, this position is controversial, as stage theatre is often assumed to be non-mediated since there are no physical barriers between the actors and the audience. I challenge the assertion that theatre is non-mediated in order to compare stage theatre with other forms of theatrical mediation such as film or puppetry. In this way, I can identify the impact of medium on the narrative and aesthetic strategies employed in different forms of theatrical mediation.

For this analysis, two different approaches to mediation will be used: the first approaches mediation as a set of technical constraints, while the second looks at media use in terms of its relationship to other forms of mediation. Once stage theatre has been placed within the context of mediation, different theoretical approaches to theatre, including theatrical semiotics and audience reception theory, can be used to illustrate how our understanding of stage theatre might be shifted. Based on the use of distinct sign systems to create meaning and the ways in which audiences understand and react to theatrical performances, stage theatre is best understood as mediated.

2.1.1 Understanding Medium

Our understanding of the properties of a medium is subject to a wide range of approaches and definitions. For the purposes of this analysis, “medium” is defined as the means of communication itself, as explored by theorists such as Meyrowitz (2001) or Bolter & Grusin (1999) working primarily with definitions inspired by different elements of the work of Marshall McLuhan. While the debate about mediation will not be covered comprehensively here, two definitional approaches to mediation are important to this discussion.

Following McLuhan’s declaration that “the medium is the message” (1994 [1964], p. 7), Meyrowitz defines a medium as “a type of setting or environment that has relatively fixed characteristics that influence communication in a particular manner” (1998, p. 103). While this definition is usually applied to technological objects, it can be applied to theatre from both a physical and behavioural perspective. Most theatrical performances, separate the performance area from the audience, darkening the audience space while the actors are brightly lit. The design of the staged elements emphasise the extraordinary nature of the event on stage, as do the exaggerated and often highly stylized techniques employed by actors. From a sociological perspective, theatres are behaviour settings (as defined by Baker, 1968) which place specific constraints on audience behaviour; they must sit quietly, responding to the performance in a limited number of ways to address the action unfolding on stage. Taken as a whole, theatrical staging conventions separate the staged action from the realm of everyday occurrence, significantly influencing the communication of staged events.

A second approach to mediation draws on other aspects of McLuhan’s work and defines media in terms of its relationship to other forms of mediation. Bolter and Grusin (1999) describe media as “the formal, social, and material network of practices that generates a logic by which additional instances are repeated or remediated, such as photography, film or television” (p. 273). This definition highlights a medium’s ability to use other media as content, a property which, while often applied to technologies based on mechanical or digital reproduction, can also be applied to theatre. Theorists often emphasise the heterogeneity of theatre, describing it as being made up of many other art forms. For instance, most theatrical presentations begin with a written script which is

then interpreted and represented by the directors and actors (Carroll, 2006). Other art forms are frequently present on stage, whether in the stage painting of classical European theatres or in the more sculptural and architectural elements of more contemporary stage design. Wagner described theatre as universal because of its ability to bring together otherwise distinct art forms, raising each to a higher level (Wagner, 1966 [1849]). By understanding the ways in which theatre integrates other media, the functional ways in which theatre meets Bolter & Grusin's definition of mediation are met, suggesting once again that stage theatre is itself a form of mediation.

Theatre can be considered as a medium according to both definitions of mediation. Theatrical practice represents a "setting or environment that has relatively fixed characteristics that influence communication in a particular manner" (Meyrowitz, 1998, p. 103). It also fits a definition of medium that emphasises the importance of a medium's ability to remediate other media (Bolter & Grusin, 1999). This suggests a close relationship between strategies of theatrical presentation and mediation.

2.1.2 Theatricality and Mediation

There is significant resistance among theatrical scholars to the idea that theatre is a form of mediation. This tendency is most closely associated with the emergence of performance art in the 20th century, and is based on the importance of the direct connection between the actor and the audience. Feminist theorists such as Phelan also reinforce this idea, placing performance in opposition to film and other media by referring to live performance art as "representation without reproduction" (Phelan, 1993, p. 146). The bodies presented to the audience are real, non-reproduced and unmediated as they are presented directly without the intermediary (politicising) interpretations of cameras and editing (Phelan, 1993). This immediacy or lack of mediation is often described as being one of the key ontological features of theatre and performance, allowing for reciprocity and therefore enhancing the authenticity of the theatrical event (Bell, 2008). This position recalls Benjamin's assertion that an actor's aura is diminished when they perform before a camera rather than directly for an audience (1988 [1936]). In these cases, theatre's immediacy – its lack of mediation – is presented as central to its ontology, defining its importance, especially in opposition to film.

The Living Theatre provides one of the most compelling examples of the artistic expression of this tendency. Influenced heavily by the writing of Antonin Artaud, the rhetoric of The Living Theatre focuses on using the artist's body as the vehicle for truth in expression (Cull, 2012). This was perhaps best exemplified by their formative performance, *Paradise Now*, which concluded with a scene titled The Rite of Universal Intercourse. In this scene, the actors walked among the spectators, reciting lists of social and sexual taboos while undressing and inviting audience members to become a part of the performance themselves (Copeland, 1990). According to Copeland, the ending of The Rite of Universal Intercourse has two important elements when it comes to understanding presence and mediation. First, the company's rejection of theatrical artifice led them to present the actors without characters or even clothing. Second, by inviting the audience on stage, they made the reactive and interactive nature of theatre spectatorship explicit, reinforcing the immediacy of the action taking place. For these reasons, Copeland describes *Paradise Now* as "the quintessential affirmation of live, unmediated presence" (1990, 30). While the nature of theatrical presence will be explored in greater detail in subsequent chapters, this formulation of the concept of presence remains an important representation of the idea that theatre is inherently unmediated.

Conversely, Blau characterises the Living Theatre's rejection of theatrical pretense as an attempt to become unmediated, but in doing so underlines the futility of this attempt, warning: "there is nothing more illusory in performance than the illusion of the unmediated" (Blau 1987, p. 164). Semiotic approaches to theatrical analysis raise similar issues, pointing out how simply placing an event on stage changes the way it is understood. For instance, by virtue of being on stage, a drunken man can be understood as a representation of drunkenness even if he is not attempting to play a role or conceal his identity (Eco, 1977). This effect comes not from the drunk man himself, but from the audience's understanding of his behaviour within a specific performance context (Eco, 1977). The addition of layers of meaning to objects on stage occurs whether or not there is an intention to theatricality on the part of the performer, and plays an essential role in semiological analyses of theatre. While Eco never refers to theatre as a medium, his description of the impact of the stage on perception is very closely related to media approaches that focus on a medium's ability to impact communication.

Exploring the conditions of theatricality, Feral identifies theatrical space as “the space of the ‘other’” (2002, 97), where theatricality and otherness are both emphasised. The theatrical space is defined not by the intention of the performer, but in the observer’s gaze, dependent largely on social and contextual cues (Feral 2002). To borrow terminology from Goffman, when audiences enter spaces framed as being theatrical, they are keyed to adopt the role and the social standing of the onlooker, changing the way that they perceive meaning with the space itself (1974). While architectural cues play an important role in shaping the gaze, no physical apparatus is needed for this transition to take place, such as in the case of street theatre. Once a theatrical space has been established, people within that space automatically infer additional layers of meaning from objects, regardless of whether this fiction is intentional or even whether the performers identify themselves as such. The multiplicity of theatrical meaning created by the gaze of the audience is fundamental to understanding theatre as a medium.

The duality of meaning which is common to theatrical presentation has been extensively documented in studies of theatrical semiotics. In her analysis of theatrical audiences, Ubersfeld describes theatrical objects such as chairs as having several simultaneous layers of meaning (1996 [1981]). Drawing on Foucault and Derrida’s work on theatrical representation, Blau concludes that the tension between signifier and signified on stage is itself at the core of the dramatic event (Blau, 1987). In other words: the status of a staged object as a real object exists simultaneously and enters into conflict with its meaning as part of the fiction being created on stage. The multiple levels of meaning are exemplified both by objects on stage as well as in the tension between the actor as individual and their role within the play.

Semiological approaches to understanding theatrical meaning have revealed some of the mechanisms behind the theatrical transformation of real objects into fictional ones. Detailed analyses of theatrical sign systems reveal that the vast majority of these signs are iconic in nature (Fischer-Lichte, 1992; Rozik, 2008), creating additional meaning primarily through resemblance with an external object. According to this logic, theatrical signification is produced by the use of recognizable images or sounds which re-present and re-produce a fictional or non-fictional reality. Even speech, usually

analysed as a symbolic sign system, can be redefined in terms of iconic signification in theatre. Because the words spoken by the actors, as written in the play script, are an imitation of the speech of their character, they are most accurately interpreted as being a sign of a sign – an iconic representation of a symbolic utterance (Rozik, 2008). It is this iconic re-presentation of other signs which defines theatricality and provides the basis for an understanding of theatre as a medium.

In theatre, iconic representation allows audience to create a robust mental image of the world being created on stage, even when the staged re-creation is not entirely accurate or perfectly detailed. As Feral (2002) and Blau (1990) suggest, this is typical of the mental shift that takes place when an individual interprets an action as being “theatrical” and thus changes their model of interpretation. The iconic nature of theatrical representation and the vivid mental images these create in audiences have led Rozik to describe theatre as an imagistic medium (2008). A heavy reliance on resemblance to create mental images makes theatre highly accessible, minimizing the necessity to learn about theatrical conventions as a prerequisite to understanding staged action. The abstract nature of modern scenography has problematized the connection of resemblance between staged objects and their meaning somewhat. Even with abstract sets, sufficient resemblance between the stage and a recognizable reality is necessary, both visually (Esslin, 1987) and in terms of functionality (Ubersfeld, 1996), for audiences to be able to understand the performance.

As illustrated here, theatricality relies on spectators’ recognition that a theatrical event is taking place and their subsequent openness to the iconic representation. Accordingly, a wide variety of strategies are used to signal to audiences that they are watching a performance. Examples of this include abstractions in the visual design of the performance space as well as stylised speech patterns and gestures on the part of the actors. This acknowledgement of differences not only lets the audience know they are watching a play, but makes them complicit in the creation of the images which make up the fictional world.

Social conventions and framing techniques are also important to many theatrical events. Audience members are told that a special theatrical event will take place,

required to buy tickets and to be at a particular place at a specific time. The architecture of theatre spaces themselves also reinforces the idea of theatrical spaces being extraordinary by separating the actors from the audience within the performance venue. As Esslin points out, these preparatory elements help mark theatrical signs as being important and allow them to properly interpret the event as theatrical (1991). These elements frame theatre and reinforce the effectiveness of its ability to create mental images for audience members.

Through framing and the use of presentational conventions, stage theatre performances are able to indicate to audience members that a special mode of understanding the world is needed. Audience members in this state have an increased awareness of the iconic representations which theatre uses to create vivid mental images. These mental images significantly alter the meaning of objects seen in a theatrical context, creating a layer of meaning which overlays the physical reality of those same objects. Comparing this shift in perception to our definitions of medium, theatre can clearly be understood as a form of mediation. The predictably iconic nature of theatrical representation and the images this creates for the audience aligns very closely with Meyrowitz's approach to medium analysis, which emphasises the ways in which a medium influences communication (1998). The social and physical contexts of stage theatre act as a medium, changing the ways in which audiences perceive the objects and actions they observe on stage.

Stage theatre practices can also be understood as a "formal, social and material network of practises" as per Bolter and Grusin's definition of medium (1999, p. 273). Making use of different conventions and architectural strategies, theatre fits this definition as well. As with other media, stage theatre encourages and allows for other media to be used and reinterpreted within a theatrical context. This ability to remediate other media is one of the critical attributes of a medium as defined by Bolter and Grusin (1999) and is clearly visible in stage theatre. As with other media, at times stage theatre uses the "logic of transparent immediacy" (Bolter & Grusin, 1999, p. 21), integrating other media seamlessly into the realistic settings and stories created on stage. Stage theatre also makes use of the "logic of hypermediacy" (Bolter & Grusin, 1999, p. 31) typical of all media, frequently calling specific attention not only to its own artificiality but

also to the different media used to create its effects. In stage theatre, these different approaches to remediation are often understood as being stylistic or aesthetic in their origins. It is clear, however, that stage theatre regularly fulfills all of the functions of mediation under this definition.

As Rozin suggests, theatre is best understood as an “imagistic medium” (2008) which makes use of the tension between different levels of meaning to shape complex narrative communication. Its ability to make use of other media and shift our perceptions suggests that stage theatre is only one form of theatrical mediation among many. Acknowledging that theatre itself is a medium allows us to position our discourse about various forms of theatre in the context of media studies and encourages a more level comparative analysis of theatre with other media. Instead of asking how technological mediation has changed the “original” form of theatre, we need to be exploring the ways that medium affects the fundamental activity of the various forms of theatrical mediation: the creation of narrative through enactment.

2.2 Toward a Taxonomy of Theatrical Mediations

Treating stage theatre as a form of mediation leads us toward new approaches in analysis with new challenges. Many of these challenges have been met in the existing literature, but require a certain amount of recontextualization in order to be suitable here. Esslin’s analysis of theatre semiotics (1991 [1987]) focuses on character enactment as the central ontological element of theatrical content. Accordingly, I we define theatrical mediation as *any mediated form which conveys narrative through the embodied enactment of characters*. This focus suggests two important foundations for our analysis: the impact of character embodiment on narrative salience and an understanding of audience reception. Both of these are the subject of much existing work not only in theatre, but in other forms of expression that have the enactment of character as a central element – referred to here as theatrical mediations. Figure 1 shows the relationships between these fields and how this analysis will form the foundation of our understanding of mediation in a theatrical context.

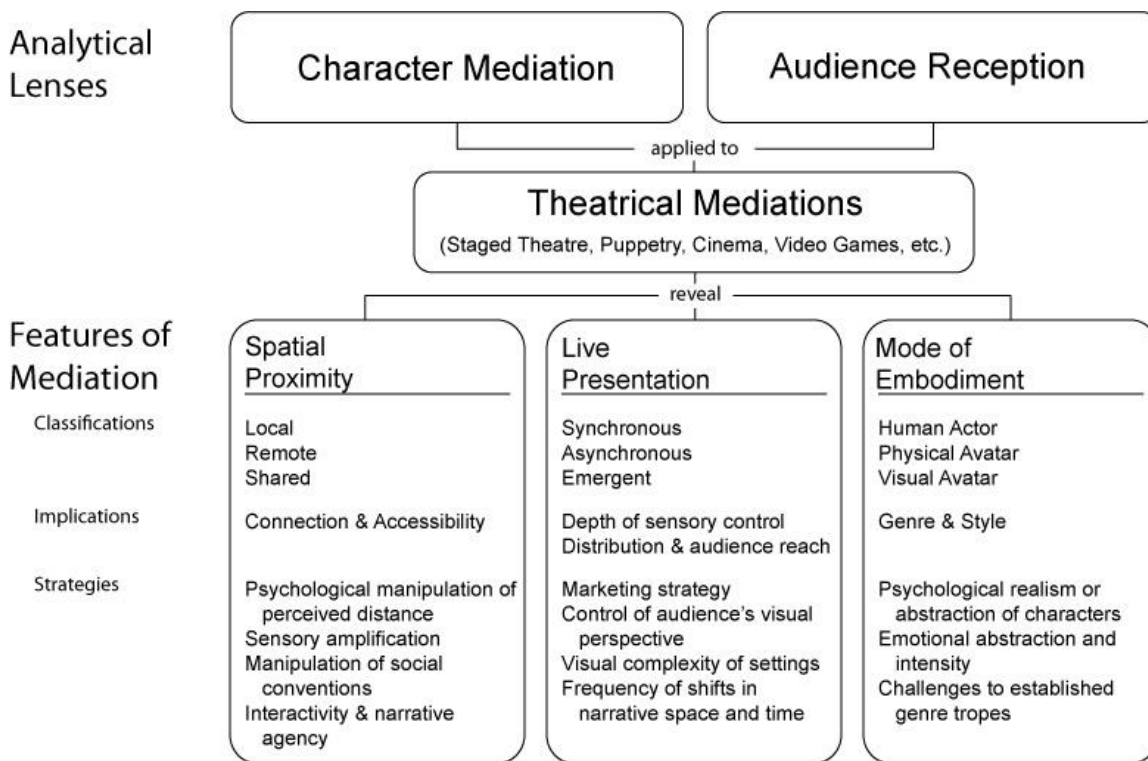


Figure 2: Analytical structure - theatrical mediation

This analytical framework places theatre as one form of mediation among others. It is therefore important to understand (1) the ways in which theatrical narrative is affected by its medium and (2) how the core elements of theatre explicated in the previous section might be implemented across other media. Stories told through enactment can be clearly identified in a wide range of communication media, and represents one of our dominant narrative strategies. In *The Field of Drama* (1991[1987]), Esslin frames a wide range of art forms driven by enactment as forms of dramatic expression. Esslin places theatre and cinema at the heart of his analysis, but also addresses other forms of theatrical mediation, such as puppetry or radio drama (1991[1987]). While this analysis of dramatic media remains one of the only detailed attempts at creating an overarching understanding of theatrical mediation, other approaches to film, theatre and media analysis are vital in fully understanding this field.

Esslin's decision to focus exclusively on events which revolve around the dramatic enactment of character is an important one. It narrows the analytical scope of the cross-media analysis by limiting the types of artefacts that are the focus of the

analysis. Esslin's definition maintains the classic division between theatre and performance art, and effectively addresses the complicating factors posed by other arts that take place on a stage such as storytelling, live music, acrobatic performance or dance. Crossing over to other media momentarily, Esslin also excludes many other mediated forms such as news broadcasts, sporting events or non-narrative computer games (1991 [1987]). The distinction being made here is somewhat artificial, as can be seen by the many examples of all these excluded forms which make use of theatrical narrative strategies. In spite of the fluidity of the boundaries of this definition, Esslin's identification of the performance of narrative as foundational to theatre remains a useful way to limit the scope of this analysis. By focusing on a specific kind of narrative content, the overall validity of the frameworks that are based on its conclusions is significantly increased.

An overview of the literature in theatre, film studies and puppetry (the most developed theoretical fields among the different kinds of theatrical mediation) reveals two areas important to all forms of theatrical mediation:

1. character embodiment as the foundation of narrative salience, and
2. audience reception and the relationship between audience and performer.

These two areas of theorization provide us with analytical lenses that are used to compare and contrast different forms of theatrical mediation. Approaching the analysis of theatrical mediations through these two lenses emphasises the importance of the relationship between the audience and character by showing how changes in that relationship affect the techniques used to present theatrical narratives. Three axes emerge from this analysis which allow us to differentiate between different forms of theatrical mediation and which begin to explain the differences between them: the spatial proximity between actors and audience, the temporal liveness of the presentation and the mode of embodiment used for enactment.

2.2.1 Character Mediation: Character Embodiment and Narrative Saliency

As identified above, the embodiment of characters is the fundamental trait which unifies all forms of theatrical mediation. This results in very distinct ways of presenting stories and constructing narrative experience. Traditionally, mimesis is used to explain the importance of the actor in conveying character. More recently, cognitive constructs such as the person schema theories have also been used to deepen our understanding of how we understand fictional characters. In this thesis, I explore the impact of distancing the actor from the audience. Puppetry, as a traditional form of physical avatar, is used to explain some of the strengths and weaknesses of representing characters through objects rather than the human body. Parallels are then drawn with the representation of the actor which underlies cinematic narrative. In the final analysis, the strategy that is used to embody characters is shown to have a direct impact on the types of characters and narratives that can effectively be presented using theatrical mediations.

The mimetic embodiment of the characters of a story was a central concern even in the earliest writings about stage theatre. Plato assigns an ethical dimension to character enactment, distinguishing between didactic recitations which recounted reality and dramatic recitations which mimetically try to re-create it (Gadamer, 1980). For Plato, mimetic character enactment has the potential to confuse audiences about whether what they are witnessing, thereby having a negative impact on their perceptions of ethics and proper behaviours (Gadamer, 1980). In his *Poetics*, Aristotle reinterprets the idea of mimesis by adding an element of creative interpretation to its imitative qualities and putting the interpretive imitation of character firmly at the core of theatrical discourse (Bal, 1982). Bal points out in her analysis of Aristotle's approach to mimesis that, through abstraction, recognition and reconstruction, the enactment of character in narrative contexts allows people to better understand the world around us (1982). The facility with which this understanding takes place is foundational to understanding the wide range of theatrical mediations in our contemporary landscape.

More recently, cognitive schemas such as the person schema have been used to explain our engagement with enacted characters. Just as our understanding of character

can inform our understanding of real-world events, the ways in which we perceive people influences our reactions to the characters we see in theatrical mediations. In his analysis of cinematic characters, Smith posits the existence of person schemas: a conceptual framework which is used by spectators to determine whether or not a character should be considered as a “person” within the context of narrative experience (1995). Embodiment is central to the person schema; the human body provides a consistent and intuitively understandable set of limitations which, although presented through performative conventions, frame characters as human (Smith, 1995). The movement of the body through space allows theatrical mediations to convey character differently than other forms of narrative, drawing on more aspects of the person schema than other forms of narrative construction. The nature of this embodiment can vary widely across different forms of theatrical mediation and can make use of both physical and virtual avatars to replace human actors. While these replacements for the human body can be used effectively to convey theatrical narratives, there are significant implications inherent in this choice.

Non-human character embodiment has important consequences for the presentation of theatrical narrative. The longest tradition of non-human embodiment and the best lens through which to understand this field is puppet theatre. On stage, the puppet has three distinct layers of meaning: (1) as a physical object on the stage, (2) as a representative of the performer through their technical skill at manipulation, and (3) as an iconic representation of the character within the narrative. Most importantly, the puppets are recognized as non-human, but act as the direct vehicle for the expression of the human puppeteers. Overcoming the barrier this presents to meeting the criteria of the person schema takes significant skill on the part of creators and actors, and is largely responsible for the importance placed on virtuosity in understanding puppet performances (Clark, 2005). Mori, writing about the uncanny valley in robotics echoes this sentiment, remarking that while bunraku puppets are not very realistic, when we see them move, we ignore the differences between the puppets and humans performing the same roles (2012 [1970]). However, certain forms of narrative are well served by the additional layer of abstraction that puppets provide. For instance, puppet performances can create more shocking narrative events, such the violent character deaths of Bunraku (Bolton, 2002) or the simulated concentration camp of Hotel Modern’s *Kamp*. Using

puppets for character embodiment changes the role of the performer as well as shaping the effectiveness of narrative events within the performance. Puppetry shows us clearly that representations of the human body can be used as a form of theatrical mediation, but just as clearly illustrates that changing the type of character embodiment necessitates strategic shifts in the way that narrative is presented.

Cinematic theatrical mediations raise similar theoretical questions by recording and re-mediating the body of the actor. Similarly to puppetry, cinematic narrative structure has had to evolve to account for this change in mediation strategy. As Sontag points out, cinema has roots not only in theatrical narrative, but also more stationary visual arts such as photography and painting (1966). This changes the status of film as artwork somewhat, leading some theatre theorists to comment on the problematic nature of searching for cinematic meaning primarily in its visual aspects (Pavis, 1991). The tradition of emphasising the visual highlights the ultimate status of film as a physical and manipulable object which allows greater care in its construction of narrative than does a theatrical event (Sontag, 1966). Accordingly, films use framing and shifts in perspective as important elements in the construction of character (Bazin, 2009; Smith, 1995). The constructed nature of film also allows characters' internal thoughts to be literalized and displayed on screen, giving audiences direct access to character elements (memories, for instance) which would otherwise be difficult to show.

This use of editing for special and temporal discontinuity is at odds with the rhetoric which positions cinema as a realistic, photo-driven medium (Smith, 1995). This rhetoric has led many film theorists to directly contrast film's realism with the artificiality of theatre. Contrasts are frequently made between the more generic stock characters which are used in some forms of theatre and the more detailed psychological realism of characters on film. Sontag's critique of this overly simplistic distinction is informative, pointing out the increased realism of characters in modernistic theatre as well as several key examples of stock characters on film (1966). In spite of their differences in the presentation of narrative, both of these forms have very similar approaches to character creation and character realism.

The distinction between realism and symbolism can be seen in theatrical mediations that use non-human actors, such as puppetry, animation and video games. Stock characters and characters with symbolic identities are common in puppetry across a wide range of cultures (Francis, 2012). The aesthetic and procedural concerns of puppetry have continued in the technological mediations of animated film and virtual world design (Nitsche, Mazalek & Clifton, 2013). It has been suggested that this tendency toward symbolism and abstraction is caused by the addition of an artificial layer between the performer and the audience which shifts audience expectation and encourages them to approach narrative abstractly (Kwon, 2011; Tillis, 1992). Not only does the specific strategy of embodiment change narrative construction strategies, but it has a significant impact on the way we construct characters and the stories in which they appear.

Most of the difference in characterization models between mediations with human actors and those which use avatars can be explained by audience expectation. When a character appears very realistic, audiences expect the character to behave in realistic ways and have a personality which more closely resembles that of a real person. An increase in the level of abstraction of the form of embodiment leads audiences to expect an equal amount of abstraction in characterization to fit with the social schemata they have developed around personhood and identity (Smith 1995). The degree to which audiences' expectations of characterization are met is directly responsible for their reactions to the performance. Accordingly, the manner in which characters are embodied plays a key role in our understanding of theatrical mediation. In most forms of theatrical media, such as theatre, film or live video, the human body (or a direct image of a human body) is used to represent the character, but others such as puppetry or animated film use physical or digital surrogates for the human body. Because of its impact on theatrical mediations, the mode of embodiment provides the first axis for creating a taxonomy of theatrical mediation, reinforcing the importance of character embodiment for this analysis.

2.2.2 Audience Reception: The relationship between audience and performer

One of the primary methods used by theatrical theorists to distinguish stage performance from film is the immediacy of the theatrical event. The spatial and temporal connection of the audience to the performer has thus become a central element of theatrical reception theory. Early film and media theory also frame this element as being important, focusing primarily on the difficulty that film actors would have in connecting with their audiences. This position has become more difficult to maintain in light of more recent performances and theories of media reception, and several writers have started breaking down the theoretical barriers between different forms of theatrical mediation.

Historically, there have been many changes in the physical relationship between the audience and the stage. Many of these changes derive from advances in architectural and lighting technologies, allowing for increasingly controlled spaces in which to stage performances (Southern, 1963). The movement of audiences from temporary stages to more permanent structures and subsequently from outdoor structures to more elaborate indoor ones has had a significant impact on audience experience (Southern, 1963). More recent developments in theatrical architecture have seen movements in two directions each of which impacts theatrical aesthetics in distinct ways. The first involves the construction of larger theatres with much clearer divisions between audience and performers and which frequently require artificial voice amplification in order for actors and singers to be understood. Performances in these spaces rely much more heavily upon the spectacular and special effects as tools for performance. The second supports a much more intimate style of performance, using flexible stage configurations to bring audiences and performers even closer to each other. These much smaller spaces are often used to support claims that theatre relies on the direct contact between audience members and performers.

Proximity has an important place in 20th century theatrical reception theory. This is likely driven by the need to differentiate theatre from film at a time when film was co-opting many of theatre's traditional social functions (Singer, 2001). Even more importance was placed on proximity with the growth of television, which also emphasised the need for liveness (Auslander, 2002). The result of this reaction against

mediation in theatrical reception theory has been on one hand an emphasis on the direct contact between the human bodies of the performers and audience members (Phelan, 1993) and on the other hand, an emphasis on the mutual gaze as empowering and representing the power of the audience (Blau, 1990). According to these theories, having the audience and performers in the same physical space subtly changes the performance, in particular the ways in which the actors interpret the script and their characters.

Proximity between the actors and audience are also accorded a special place when it comes to creating a sense of personal connection between the audience and characters. This connection is referred to as presence or aura (Power, 2008), and is considered important in both theatrical and film studies. In early film studies in particular, the lack of physical proximity is seen as being a huge challenge for film actors. In *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Benjamin posits that an actor's "aura" would be significantly damaged by not being able to see their audience directly, relying instead on the camera to convey their personality (1986 [1936]). While, for Benjamin, the loss of an actor's aura is a generally positive change which democratizes the performer's art (1986 [1936]), in theatrical circles, it is often taken as an indication that something important had been lost with the addition of technological mediation and reproduction between actors and audience. Bazin (2009) makes similar observations of early film, but also points out how close-ups and other camera techniques have the effect of closing some of this distance for audiences. The relationship between mediation and copresence will be evaluated in greater detail in Chapter 3, but for the purposes of this taxonomy, the important point is to note that the distance in both time and space is often seen as dissociating actors from their audiences.

The importance of spatial co-location has been problematized in many experimental stage performances. The work of Vito Acconci provides many examples, but *Seed Bed* is perhaps the best illustration of his preoccupation with shaping the relationship between audience and performer (Kaye, 2007). In *Seed Bed*, Acconci performs from under the floor of a specially designed ramp, listening to, fantasising about and occasionally speaking with the audience as he masturbates under the floor (Kaye, 2007). Audiences for *Seed Bed* know that Acconci is present, but are unable to

see him, problematizing the importance of the visual connection in creating a relationship of copresence between the audience and performer. Other performances, such as Helena Waldmann's *Wodka Konkav*, used elaborate systems of mirrors or windows to separate the audience from the performers (Lehmann, 2006). Lehmann characterises this performance space as being physical yet virtual as it simultaneously draws attention to the human body even as it removes the body from the direct perceptions of the audience (2006). These two examples serve to question the idea of stage presence and the importance of direct contact between actors and audiences through artistic experimentation, showing us that copresence is possible even without a direct unimpeded line between the audience and spectator. Indeed, they cause us to question whether or not that direct perception is actually essential to the theatrical experience.

The theatrical experiments detailed above emphasise one of the most important contradictions of our understanding of theatrical space: in spite of a rhetoric which positions theatrical spaces as being shared by audiences and performers, there are real separations between the two groups. Increasingly, performers are breaking down these barriers, allowing audiences to occupy the performance space itself. This participatory form of theatrical experience is often associated with the happenings of Allan Kaprow and the performative interventions of performance art groups such as Fluxus (2003). For Kaprow, happenings should be unrehearsed and performed by everyone, eliminating passive onlookers from the event itself (1993). In these situations, the outcome of the performance itself is uncertain, allowing real agency on the part of all participants, something which is unheard of in traditional theatrical performances. Boal, in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, envisions a similar elimination of the spatial barriers between the stage and audience spaces, encouraging audience members to come into the performance space and make changes to the situations being played out on stage (1979). For all of the differences in their ideologies, allowing audience members on stage has one very important function for both Kaprow and Boal: allowing the audience to interact directly with the event as it unfolds. Breaking down the barriers between audiences and actors allowed both of these creators to stage performances which differed in significant ways from traditional theatrical performance as well as from its cinematic mediations. The

interaction that is implicit when audiences are given access to the performance space creates new forms of theatrical mediation.

Further exploration of audience members being allowed into the performance spaces shows that more conventional stories can also be effectively told in this way. Interactive and immersive performance events, such as those staged by Punchdrunk, allow audience members to become involved in the stories themselves. Audience members in Punchdrunk performances are masked in order to draw them into participating in the story while maintaining them as being separate and distinct from the action itself (Machon, 2013). The company's 2007 production of *The Masque of the Red Death* transported audiences into Edgar Allen Poe's novella of the same name, using choreography, spatial design and lighting effects to draw them into the laudanum-infused perceptions of the story (Machon, 2013). Audience members were free to walk throughout the performance space to create their own experience of the narrative and, while this occasionally led to a sense of not having seen the "proper" story, the experience is widely seen as rewarding (Machon, 2013). For this kind of "immersive theatre" (Machon, 2013) or "environmental theatre" (Schechner, 1988), the primary challenge lies in creating an environment that allows audiences to interact in a way that feels significant, but that does not disrupt the story that is being told. This concept is important in the design of digital experiences as well, and is usually referred to as agency in those contexts (Murray, 1999).

In both of the cases seen above, interactive strategies based on the adoption of contextually-driven social roles (performance rules in the case of Boal or Kaprow and spectator masks in the case of Punchdrunk) are used to provide a framework for audience experience. The open-ended ambiguity required for successful interactive narrative (Gasperini, 1999) relies in these cases on the use and manipulation of internalized knowledge of social conventions implicit in the events themselves. This reliance on people's social schemata allows for complexity to emerge from the reduction in mental processing that schemata allow. Consequently, audiences are able to take a more active role in creating the story, acquiring their own agency within the fiction of the theatrical event. The regularity with which this phenomenon is experienced (Schechner, 1988; Machon, 2013) suggests that an expectation of agency and direct intervention is

created specifically by breaking down the barriers between audience and performer. The change that this engenders to the functioning of the theatrical event leads many to rename them, calling them participants (Kaprow, 2003) or spectactors (Boal, 1979) reflecting the drastically changed role of audiences who share the theatrical space experience and the desire to recognize the ways in which their responses and modes of reception are distinct from more traditional forms of theatrical audience experience.

Changing the spatial relationship of theatrical mediation by technological means, such as with cameras and projection, also has significant consequences for audience behaviour and reception. Rather than experiencing the actors directly, film audiences see a projected image of the actors, and are separated from them in both space and time. Film thus presents us with an inversion of the situation of that which is present in environmental / interactive theatre. If sharing a space more closely results in an increase in interactivity, we would expect to see a decrease in audience activity in the cinematic context. Studies of early cinematic audiences bear out this hypothesis, with reports of very active audiences shouting advice or insults at the screen in the early 20th century gradually giving way to a much quieter and more passive audience experience (Singer, 2001). This change in audience behaviour accompanied not the integration of cinema as an important form of cultural expression (Singer, 2001), but also a shift in the narrative strategies of cinematic attractions away from sensationalist fictions such as melodramas or anarchic comedy (Stafford, 2007). The behaviour setting and role expectations that have grown from cinematic mediation are significant, and correlate very closely to the spatial and temporal relationship between spectators and performers.

Current theories of cinematic audience reception still frame audiences as being active, but the active component of spectatorship is usually limited to audiences' ability to reinterpret and shift the meaning of the filmed document (Stafford, 2007). This echoes approaches to audience reception in the visual arts (as suggested by Sontag, 1966), as well as reader-response approaches to textual narrative (Stafford, 2007). For Hall (1966), the audience's primary role is to decode the meaning created by the knowledge and structure embedded in the cinematic narrative. New meanings are created based on whether or not a particular audience member used a dominant, negotiated or oppositional approach to this interpretation (Hall, 1966). Focus on audience

interpretation is not unique to cinematic mediations of theatre, but it takes on a heightened importance because of the distance between audiences and performers.

The lack of synchronicity in the presentation of cinematic narrative also changes the ways we analyse and experience cinematic narrative. Film's status as a reproduced artefact allows for close readings and other detail-oriented approaches to the analysis of the performative artefact. Such analyses can be conducted in ways that highlight the importance of audience response and the techniques that are used to produce them (see Bordwell, 1989; Smith, 1995). Because other researchers and audience members can watch the same films, such analytical results are also reproducible, which encourages debate about interpretation. Reproduction is important for cinematic audiences as well, since it allows for the growth of significant communities surrounding events which can change the ways in which the films themselves are understood (Mathijs & Sexton, 2011). In some cases, these communities can change the experience of spectatorship significantly, adding social rituals to the event and challenging the dominant interpretations of the film itself (Mathijs & Sexton, 2011). The distance in time and space between the audience and performers change not only the analytical approaches but also shift audience behaviour in relation to cinematic theatrical mediations.

Audience positioning in digital forms of theatrical mediation such as video games has elements in common with both cinema and environmental theatre. Like film, video games are mass produced artefacts. The audience never shares space or time with the creators of the game or with the characters in the narrative. Most of the performances in this form of theatrical mediation have been created before the audience has started viewing it, allowing very wide audiences to experience the same narrative event. The only part of the final event that is missing is the performance of the player through their in-game avatar. Video games thus share a very significant element with environmental theatre performances, since audience members (by now renamed players) are given agency within the narrative space itself. Players are able to determine the speed with which the protagonist moves through the plot, decide who they speak with and how well they navigate the challenges of the game world. As in environmental theatre, the

players' agency is very tightly controlled in a way that gives the sensation of freedom while not interfering with the story being told.

Many studies of video game experience focus on the impact that the interactivity brought about by a shared narrative space have on the experience of narrative (e.g. Crawford, 2005; Murray, 2004). For Jenkins (2004), embedding narrative into the design of game spaces is an important aspect of game-based narratives, provided that players are able to enact elements of the story themselves. Within this model, the spaces themselves provide narrative information to the player, frequently using well-established genre tropes to facilitate narrative understanding (Jenkins, 2004). These strategies are also an important part of environmental theatre allowing audiences to understand their narrative responsibilities within the scope of the event (Schechner, 1973). The spatial relationship between audience and narrative remains a strong factor in mapping out the narrative affordances of this genre.

As with other forms of theatrical mediation, synchronicity plays an important role in constructing narrative in video games. Like film, games are mass produced and distributed to a large audience, and remain very asynchronous in this regard. This allows for the emergence of communities which gravitate to certain games and game experiences, as can be seen in the emergence of gameplay videos, game mods and other forms of game-based creativity (Egenfeldt-Nielsen, Smith & Tosca, 2008). Conversely, the narratives presented by games emerge in real time as a result of player actions (Galloway, 2006). The control that users exert over the flow of time and pacing in games leads many to question whether or not video games are suitable platforms for narrative expression at all (e.g. Eskelinen, 2004; Juul, 2005). This tension between narrative and the control of time is played out in the structure of many games in which periods of gameplay alternate with cinematic cut scenes which convey narratively salient information. The gameplay-cut scene structure is also reminiscent of environmental theatre performances such as *The Masque of the Red Death* discussed above, where different forms of temporal interaction alternate in order to advance an established story while allowing for some interactivity. The common strategies that are present between video games and environmental theatre help highlight the commonalities between

different forms of theatrical mediation and the ways in which enactment serves as a narrative strategy across media.

2.3 Distinguishing features of theatrical mediations

By analysing theatrical mediations in terms of character mediation and audience reception reveals three features of mediation which have a significant impact on the creation and reception of different forms of theatrical mediation. The selection of these features over others represents a conscious choice to avoid differentiating theatrical media forms of mediation based solely on technology. Instead, the emphasis is on the impact that these technological choices have on the audiences' experiences of enacted narrative. By avoiding reducing each medium to its material apparatus, this taxonomy calls attention to the ways audiences understand and attach meaning to enacted narrative. This is important to the present research, as it helps reposition audience experiences of these narratives (and thus their experience of copresence in these contexts) away from a technologically deterministic model. In this way, the extraordinary variety of aesthetic choices available to any given technology or group of technologies is acknowledged, accompanied by awareness that each of these categories could be further subdivided on the basis of these aesthetic choices.

1. **Spatial Proximity:** The physical proximity of the spectator to the narrative space is the first important factor. In some cases, such as in staged theatre or puppetry, the audience is local to the performance and shares a room with the narrative being enacted. In other cases, such as film or animation, the narrative space is remote and projected into the audience space. An additional distinction is made for those theatrical mediations where the narrative space is shared, and the audience is able to have a direct presence within the narrative space.
2. **Live Presentation:** The relationship between the time of creation and reception is also significant. Some forms of theatrical mediation, such as staged theatre, are synchronous, presenting the narrative to the audience as it is being enacted. Others are asynchronous, being produced long before they are seen by audiences. Narrative video games mark an

important shift in the temporal possibilities of theatrical mediation. Since they are completed long before being played, they can be seen as asynchronous, but the playing of the game causes the narrative to unfold live, giving it aspects of synchronous presentation as well, a situation that is expressed here as being emergent.

3. **Mode of embodiment:** This final axis concerns the nature of the body which is enacting the characters in the theatrical narrative. Both film and theatre use human actors to portray roles. Other forms of theatrical mediation use different forms of avatar to replace the actor. These can be physical (as in puppetry), visual (as in animated film or video games).

These axes, applied to different forms of theatrical mediation, provide a clear way of understanding the sources of the differences between the different forms of theatrical mediation. Each form of theatrical mediation uses a unique combination of these elements, as summarized in the table below:

	Spatial Proximity	Live Presentation	Mode of Embodiment
Staged Theatre	Local	Synchronous	Human actor
Puppetry	Local	Synchronous	Physical avatar
Environmental Theatre	Local & Shared	Synchronous	Human actor
Some Video Installation	Local	Asynchronous	Human actor
Filmed narrative	Remote	Asynchronous	Human actor
Animation	Remote	Asynchronous	Visual avatar
Live Video	Remote	Synchronous	Human actor
Narrative Video Games	Remote & Shared	Emergent	Visual avatar
Virtual Theatre	Remote & Shared	Synchronous	Visual avatar

As can be seen in this table, while spatial proximity and live presentation have been viewed as interdependent, digital technologies have broken down this barrier, allowing for theatrical mediations which are both remote from their audiences (as in cinema) as well as synchronous (as in theatre). The aspects that these new digital forms of theatrical mediation share with previous forms not only allow us to illustrate Bolter and

Grusin's theory of remediation (1999) in action, but allow us to make important distinctions between the effects of space and time as aspects of theatrical mediation. Each of these features of mediation has a distinct effect on the structures and narrative potential of enacted narrative, causing shifts in both aesthetics and narrative strategy between different forms of theatrical mediation.

An analysis of the effects of the features of mediation reveals a number of strategies which used to bring the stage action closer to audiences. These strategies facilitate the close relationship between audiences and characters that defines all forms of theatrical mediation and has been the subject of detailed analysis for staged theatre (Power, 2008; Auslander, 2008), environmental theatre (Schechner, 2003), cinema (Smith, 1995; Bordwell, 1989) and video games (Murray, 2004; Crawford, 2005). Accordingly, the patterns of narrative and presentational strategies associated with the different approaches to theatrical mediation provide important insights into the appropriateness of strategies employed by emerging forms of theatrical mediation such as virtual theatre. A complete analysis of these strategies and approaches would take significantly more space than is available here and represents an important avenue for future research, but a cursory look at the different approaches still provides insight into the effects of mediation on theatrical expression.

Before outlining these categories, it is also important to note that, while they provide us with a useful framework for understanding differences between theatrical mediations, they are not intended to be prescriptive. Experiments in inter-media and multi-media performance techniques are often designed to problematize and question precisely those limits which are described here. There are many examples, such as Helena Waldmann's *Wodka Konkav*, cited earlier, which defy easy categorization. As such, it is important to remember that the function of these categories is not to create neat categories for understanding individual works, but to make broader statements about creative tendencies observed through differences in how theatrical stories are told using different constraints when it comes to space, liveness and embodiment.

2.3.1 Spatial Proximity

An analysis of the impact of the spatial proximity of audiences and characters reveals that spatial relationships are closely tied to the accessibility of the characters and the creation of audience connections with the story being told. The strategies associated with this spatial relationship help create the conditions for spectatorship. Some of the strategies address the perceived distance of the characters using both perceptual and social strategies. The relative audience agency permitted by the spatial configuration also changes approaches to theatrical narratives. Theories of space and social interaction such as proxemics (Hall, 1966) and dramaturgical sociology (Goffman, 1963) provide additional context to this analysis. In terms of Hall's proxemics (1966), the overall goal of these strategies is to take events which occur in the public distance (or even farther) and have the audience treat them as if they occur in social or even personal space. Bringing audience perceptions of the performance to this distance is important for establishing emotional connections between audiences and characters. Each form of theatrical mediation uses strategies that both distance audiences and bring them closer to the action.

Local theatrical mediations (staged theatre, puppet theatre & environmental theatre) place the audience in the same room as the characters. While the event is happening in a single room, the separation of the audience space from the performance space creates a sense of distance in spite of the closeness of the performers. Paradoxically, in spite of these constraints on behaviour, the possibility of walking across the room to physically engage the actors – the possibility of breaking down the distance imposed by the space – is cited as a significant appeal of theatrical mediations in this category (Phelan, 1993; Blau, 1990). Interpersonal communication has specific properties at social or public distances: the need for raised voices to attract attention, a certain formality in communication, added importance placed on postural communication and a lack of public recognition between people (Hall, 1966). These features of social communication are all seen in theatrical performance, but specific strategies help decrease the impact of this distance. Lighting is made brighter on stage and darker in the audience space, allowing the audience to recognize the characters, but negating the need for the characters to recognize the audience in return. Voices and gestures are

often exaggerated to increase the audience's understanding of the story being communicated. In addition, the social conventions of theatrical spectatorship are very specific, only allowing audience members to behave in very constrained ways (Goffman, 1963). The exaggeration of the on-stage elements combined with the social and physical limitations placed on audiences emphasise the action taking place on stage while minimizing the importance of the events occurring in audience spaces.

This creates a unique proximal relationship between spectators and the characters on stage. The actors on stage are using all of the expected cues for presentation in social and public space. Auditorium design and behavioural scripts in turn lead spectators to have audience members ignore the cues coming from the intimate and personal distances (Esslin, 1991 [1987]). The taboos associated with sensations usually found in these distances are strong enough that most artistic uses of olfactory, thermal and tactile stimuli are received with a great deal of discomfort by audiences (Kaprow, 2003). The inversion of the importance of proximal zones creates a unique social space in which audiences feel as if they are participating in the performance at a personal or close social distance when the actual physical distances are much greater. At the same time, audiences adopt a largely passive role, making many of their interactions more typical of the distant public range. These allow audiences to be receptive to social and personal cues at a much greater distance, allowing for a greater sense of empathy and connection with characters that are physically relatively distant from the audience members themselves.

Remote theatrical mediations, such as filmed narrative, animation and live video, do not locate the enacted character in the same physical space as the audience at all. As discussed earlier, however, maintaining a close emotional and empathetic connection between audiences and characters is just as important in these media. For remote theatrical mediations, however, there is no proximal relationship between the characters and audience members, and the strategies needed are much stronger. These forms demonstrate a high reliance on sensory amplification, and both visual and auditory stimuli are exaggerated. Images on screen are very bright and dominate the visual field of audiences (either by using large screens or by encouraging a reduced distance between the audience and the screen itself). The sounds associated with the narrative

environment are also exaggerated and often created separately from the enactment of the narrative by Foley artists or other means of mimetically creating soundscapes. Camera techniques are also very important, either for decreasing the perceived distance of the characters using close-ups or by using character perspective shots to imply interactions typical of personal distances (Smith, 1995; Bazin, 2009). Public screenings of cinematic narrative happen in very similar conditions to those present in staged theatre productions, minimizing the sensory and social impact of other spectators. While the initial distance may be much greater, research has shown that audiences still relate to the events on screen in a much more social and direct way than the proxemics would warrant (Smith, 1993; Stafford, 2007).

Shared narrative spaces in theatrical mediation, such as those used in environmental theatre and narrative video games, also result in distinct approaches to proxemics. These theatrical mediations allow audience members to move freely within the narrative space (in the case of local shared spaces) or gives them control over an avatar in the narrative space (in the case of remote shared spaces). The primary implication of allowing the audience to move through the performance space is that neither the distance from the event or the audience's point of view can be controlled by creators. Instead, these forms rely heavily on guided interaction to draw audience members into the narrative. Audience members become participants, adopting an active role within the context of the narrative being enacted. Not only does this make it more difficult to control the narrative flow (Murray, 1999), but requires new strategies of spatial design in order to establish narrative context. The narrative flexibility of these spaces are increased by using environmental storytelling techniques which draw on players' knowledge of narrative spaces to provide additional context (Bizzocchi, 2007), sometimes drawing on other forms of environmental design such as theme park design (Jenkins, 2004). For both environmental theatre and video games, the goal of the spatial design is to impart sufficient narrative information to the audience in order to manage the expectations they have of their interactions.

Finding the right balance of closeness and distance is a particular challenge for shared narrative spaces. The challenge in terms of proxemics for performances where audiences and performers share the same space is unique. Rather than trying to change

audience perception to make them feel closer to the action, steps are often taken to distance them from the events as they unfold. This can be done by identifying audience members, such as Punchdrunk does by having audience members wear masks (Machon, 2013) or by creating subtle separations in the space itself to control audience movements (Schechner, 1973). Creating the right proxemic impression is also important for video games. Here, audiences are allowed to control the visual perspective and pacing of the story, often by controlling the actions of the protagonist. This encourages them to relate to the character they control, allowing them to see their experience and that of the character as overlapping. The spatial design of the interaction is significant, as the game spaces must guide players through the narrative while maintaining the illusion of choice. While environmental theatre and video games use different approaches to proxemics, these approaches modify the impact of local or remote narrative spaces in very similar ways.

Overall, the spatial proximity of a theatrical mediation (whether it is local or remote) and the degree of access it allows audiences access to the narrative space (whether it is shared or not) changes the strategies used to create connections between audiences and the characters in the story. Audiences are encouraged to see the event as occurring at the social or personal distance (as defined by Hall, 1966). Each form of theatrical mediation uses perceptual strategies to encourage audiences to experience the event in this way. These strategies provide theatrical mediations with distinctive characteristics which help set them apart and define their production aesthetics.

2.3.2 Live Presentation

While liveness is generally presented as being connected to space and time, the facility with which video can be created and presented simultaneously problematizes the conflation of these two elements of theatrical mediation. Using terminology drawn from media analysis, the temporal relationship between production and presentation are categorized as being synchronous (performed and presented simultaneously), asynchronous (recorded and presented at a later time) or emergent (complete artefacts where the narrative emerges from live interaction) (Pearce, Boellstorff, & Nardi, 2011). As this section will illustrate, the temporal aspect of theatrical mediation is very closely

associated with the control of narrative settings and pacing, and with the size of potential audiences. Since asynchronous theatrical mediations are completed artefacts by the time audiences see them, they are able to exert more detailed control over the audience's visual and auditory experience (Sontag, 1966; Smith, 1995). As they can be reproduced and distributed, we also see a significant shift in audience accessibility and a change in audience composition and expectation when compared to synchronous theatrical mediations (Benjamin, 1986 [1936]). According to Benjamin's analysis, synchronous theatrical mediations are able to attract a wider and more diverse audience. The impact of differences in liveness are further theorized by Ubersfeld, who notes that the careful framing of asynchronous media allows for more passive forms of spectatorship compared with live events which must be processed and contextualized more actively by the audience (1996). Indeed, the rhetoric of a return to active spectatorship is prevalent in studies of emergent theatrical mediations, where audiences are able to shape the stories directly. As a result, theatrical mediations in each of these categories require drastically different approaches to narrative construction and publicity. The classifications of live presentation (synchronous, asynchronous and emergent), have been borrowed from digital media, and help highlight the theoretical complexity of understanding narrative time.

Synchronous theatrical mediations are performed simultaneously with their presentation, and tend to use approaches to narrative that highlight uniqueness and immediacy. They can be either local (staged theatre, puppetry and environmental theatre) or remote (live video or virtual theatre) from their audiences. On a practical level, for synchronous theatrical mediations, there is no time to edit or adjust performances before they are seen by the audience. The presentation of narrative space and time is therefore much more static (Sontag, 1966) than in theatrical mediations where more detailed manipulation of the audience's senses can be accomplished. This decreased ability to control point of view and effectively frame the audience's sensory perceptions leads to an increased cognitive load for audience members trying to prioritize narrative elements during the performance (Ubersfeld, 1996). Consequently, the narrative strategies of these forms tend to use slower pacing and maintain individual settings for much longer than asynchronous theatrical mediations.

The slower pacing also affects the presentation of narrative setting. Generally, individual settings are maintained for longer and fewer settings are used in synchronous performances. The technical challenges inherent in creating several live settings simultaneously are only part of the problem, however. Historical research shows us that rapid cuts between multiple settings were a staple of stage melodrama at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries (Vardac, 1949; Singer, 2001). Economic concerns rather than technical impossibility were the primary drivers of the reduction in this strategy in staged theatre (Singer, 2001), as cinematic narratives were able to create these effects much more cheaply and defray the cost across a much wider audience due to their distribution model. However, since film and stage theatre have very different spatial relationships, they do not provide us with the clearest insight into this particular dimension.

Television broadcasts make use of both live and recorded footage, and comparisons of these two broadcast modalities provides a very clear demonstration of the importance of liveness in our understanding of theatrical mediations. On both a technical and aesthetic level, there are significant differences between live and recorded broadcasts. Live television events take place primarily in settings adapted specifically for cameras and microphones, using a small number of very carefully controlled settings (Ytreberg, 2006). More ambitious live events, such as the BBC's 2000 Today celebration, may use a wider range of settings, but risk running into extensive technical difficulties that can threaten to undermine the goals and purpose of the production itself (Marriott, 2007). The technical limitations of live broadcasting accordingly make use of fewer and simpler settings than their recorded counterparts. These differences have been mitigated somewhat by technological advances which have made live broadcasting much easier (Marriott, 2007), however live narrative broadcasts have developed a specific aesthetic style based on longer duration, medium and long shots with minimal camera movement (Barker, 2013), and tend to emphasise their lack of polish and imperfections (Marriott, 2007). The success of this aesthetic in creating a sense of authenticity has resulted in it being copied by broadcasts that seek a sense of immediacy, in particular reality television (Crisell, 2012). Live television broadcasts also make extensive use of on-site audiences to reinforce their liveness, often showing them directly on screen, whether for sporting events or large event broadcasts (Marriott, 2007)

or live broadcasts of stage theatre or opera (Barker, 2013). The limited number of settings, aesthetics of simplicity and the emphasis on the on-site audience all serve to reinforce the authenticity and unpredictability of the live event. This, in turn, gives the live broadcast special status among audience members which is distinct from most forms of recorded television. That these differences seen between stage theatre and cinema persist in an examination of live and recorded television, as illustrated by the extensive academic literature, suggest strongly that it is the difference in liveness rather than spatial proximity which create these effects.

Asynchronous theatrical narratives, as a result, have a very different approach to performance and narrative structures (Loiselle & Maron, 2012), taking advantage of the flexibility afforded by careful editing and the juxtaposition of different narrative elements. Since they are able to control the audience's point of view in significant detail, they are able to use rapid shifts in perspective and location. Careful editing allows for tightly controlled transitions which are a key part of narrative expressivity in these forms. The ability to edit together several takes of a scene also significantly changes the way that the form interacts with the space it inhabits. Consequently, the number and the level of detail in the settings for asynchronous theatrical mediations tend to be much higher and the pacing of the narrative tends to be faster (Barker, 2013). This is not to say that asynchronous theatrical mediations such as film are unable to create slower paced narratives. Rather, when we look at the two categories as a whole, these tendencies become clear over a large number of examples.

The introduction of asynchronous theatrical mediations has significantly changed the composition of theatrical and cinematic audiences. While there was very little difference at the beginning between audiences for stage melodramas and filmed melodramas (Singer, 2001), by the time Walter Benjamin wrote *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* in 1936, the two groups were significantly different from each other. Unlike their theatrical counterparts, film producers were able to create one film and reproduce it many times, thus offering more complex productions to audiences for a much smaller cost (Singer, 2001). This turn toward the spectacular had the effect of attracting a mass audience while decreasing the perceived authenticity and artistic merit of the form, two of the defining characteristics of film identified by Benjamin (1986

[1936]). Many aspects of Benjamin's article have been problematized (see Gumbrecht & Marrinan, 2003, for several examples), however his observations highlight the fact that, a few decades after the first public showing, asynchronous theatrical mediations had shown themselves to be far more effective at addressing a mass audience than stage theatre. Since Benjamin wrote his article, films have become much more adept at creating the kind of aura he describes as missing from the form. Instead, the major impact of mechanical reproduction on theatrical mediation has been in the economic aspects of distribution and its impact on audience demographics (Singer, 2001). As a result, audience framing strategies in asynchronous theatrical mediations tends to emphasise the universality of the narrative experience, while synchronous theatrical mediations focus on the uniqueness of individual performance events. This aspect of theatrical mediation will be the subject of Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Emergent theatrical mediations, such as video games, are based on digital technology and occupy the middle ground between these two poles. Like asynchronous theatrical mediations, emergent narratives exist as completed artefacts before they are experienced by an audience. However, the details of the narrative are controlled by the audience member as the event unfolds, much like synchronous theatrical mediations. Like the other two approaches to time, this affects the presentation of narrative space in very important ways. Most emergent theatrical mediations allow the audience to control significant elements of their sensory experience. Changes in point of view usually follow the user-controlled protagonist of the story being told, even when users are not controlling a character within the narrative space.

The emergent properties of these theatrical mediations also have a significant impact on their social impact. Since these forms of theatrical mediation are completed artefacts, they are able to be distributed to a very wide range of audience members. This allows people to very easily compare their experience with others. Because the narrative emerges over the course of gameplay, they are also able to compare experience with other audience members during their experience of the story. The proliferation of game websites offering tips or walkthroughs and the growth of gameplay are only some of the techniques that are used by fans of computer games to share their narrative experiences with each other. These online interactions between audience members go far beyond

the interactions between fans of either asynchronous or synchronous theatrical mediations, although there are a few exceptions to this rule (especially in the case of serialized narratives). Because they are able to see other people's interactions with the narrative and thus better understand the impact of their own agency within the game, audience members' experience of their own narrative agency is enhanced. The depth of information about the impact of their agency on the narrative is unparalleled in other forms of theatrical mediation.

2.3.3 Mode of Embodiment

While the unifying element of theatrical mediations is the embodied enactment of narrative, it is important to distinguish between different strategies for realizing that embodiment. In some cases, the characters are embodied by human actors, either in front of the audience directly or through filmed reproductions of their actions. In other cases, characters are embodied by representations of human bodies; these can be physical avatars (as used in puppetry) or purely visual avatars (as used in animation, video games or virtual theatre). The mode of embodiment has a significant impact on stylistic and aesthetic decisions that are made about theatrical mediations. This impact of shifting modes of embodiment will be explored in two ways: first, through the semiotic distinctions created by the relative iconicity of the embodied character, and second through its impact on audience expectation, especially through the concept of the uncanny valley as applied to theatrical expression.

Theatrical mediations that use **human embodiment** (such as stage theatre, film and live video) mediate the human body in a variety of ways, leading to some confusion. For the purposes of this taxonomy, however, video and photographic representations of the human body will be considered alongside physical copresence as the human body itself is seen by the audience. In such cases, the actor's physical and emotional reactions are directly visible to audiences, allowing the actor to become a direct iconic representation of their character. As Esslin states: "the actor is the iconic sign *par excellence*: a real human being who has become a sign for a human being" (Esslin, 1987, p. 56; original emphasis). The use of human embodiment creates a connection between stage theatre and filmed narrative that distinguishes them from other forms of

theatrical mediation by changing the mode of reference that audiences use to understand character (Rozik, 2008). The iconic nature of the human embodiment of character is also a key element of studies of filmed narrative (Smith, 1995). Human embodiment of characters in these forms of theatrical mediation is taken as an important semiotic element which differentiates them from other forms of expression such as novels (Smith, 1995), puppetry (Rozik, 2008) and “paratheatrical” performers such as athletes or acrobats (Schechner, 1988, p. 50). The key element of the actor’s embodiment of their character is very closely tied to concepts of audience expectation and believability.

The cognitive side of this relationship is illustrated by Smith’s concept of the “Person Schema,” a conceptual framework that guides our interpretations of characters in theatrical mediations (1995). Our willingness to accept an enacted character as a person relies on a wide variety of sensory and behavioural cues evidenced by the character’s actions (Smith 1995). The effectiveness of such cues is not based solely on resemblance, as can be seen in the related concept of the uncanny valley (Mori, 2012 [1970]). Our discomfort with humanoid robotics comes not from the robot’s appearance or movements, but by the relationship between the two; the closer an object is to looking human, the more we expect it to move like one (Mori, 2012 [1970]). This is not the case in non-narrative or paratheatrical forms, where extraordinary or virtuosic movements are intended to separate the performer from everyday movement and experience (Howard, 2008). When the goal is the enactment of character for narrative purposes, human actors representing characters are expected to behave in very realistic ways in order to not disturb the iconic representation and its reliance on resemblance and realism.

Theatrical mediations which make use of **visual or physical avatars** instead of human actors often make use of much more symbolic and less realistic forms of narrative. Due to its long history, this is best theorized in the context of puppetry. Indeed, many symbolist playwrights (especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries) saw puppetry as a way of reducing the reliance on the realism inherent in human actors. This idea is taken farthest by Maurice Maeterlinck, who saw the human body on stage as destroying the poetry and symbolism of theatre and advocated the use of puppets as a way of restoring purity to dramatic representation (Kwon, 2011). While this romantic

notion of the role of puppets may not hold up to closer scrutiny now, it is based on a number of important principles of representation that form the basis of modern puppetry theory. Primary among these is the importance of the occlusion of the operator in puppet theatre: the operator is hidden by the puppet they are manipulating (Tillis, 1996). Sometimes, there is a literal barrier between the operator and the audience but even when the operator is visible and audible; it is the object as the site of representation that has presence for the audience (Tillis, 1996). The puppeteer's ability to remain visible yet outside the realm of narrative signification is an important skill, and this "anti-presence" (Howell, 1998, p. 211) allows for the emergence of the puppet as a character with its own presence on stage.

While human actors are expected to behave in very realistic ways, the fact that puppets themselves are not alive makes them suited to different narrative and aesthetic purposes. Characters represented by puppets tend to be simple and make heavy use of easily recognizable archetypes as important aspects of symbolic characterization. The way that character information is conveyed in these cases becomes primarily symbolic rather than primarily iconic. I would argue that this phenomenon is in keeping with Smith's approach to characterization through the person schema (1995). The first criterion that Smith identifies for triggering the person schema is the need for the character to have a discrete human body. The rest of the criteria follow from this first, and must before all be consistent with the body being depicted in order for audiences to connect with the character being portrayed. Since puppets are themselves abstractions of the human body it becomes natural and congruous within the context of the performance for their other traits to be abstractions of human behaviours as well. The affinity of theatrical mediations that use avatars to enact characters for symbolic and archetypal narratives is well grounded in both theatrical theory and cognitive approaches to characterization.

2.4 Virtual Theatre Applications

I distinguish theatrical mediations based on three distinguishing features: spatial proximity, live presentation and mode of embodiment. The combination of these features has a significant impact on the narrative tools and strategies that are generally used by

performances created in a particular medium. The tendency of theatrical expression to conform to the limitations of the media of presentation is predicted by many approaches to media studies. More importantly, it does not preclude artists from creating expressive works outside of these norms that are all the more expressive for breaking the mould of medium-driven expectation. However, performances which deviate from these conventions are usually interpreted as being extraordinary (whether positively or negatively) because of the ways in which they challenge the conventions brought about by their chosen medium. The following table summarizes the primary impacts of each of the distinguishing features, and will be followed by a brief discussion of some of the implications of this way of breaking down theatrical mediations.

Spatial Proximity	Live Presentation	Live Presentation	Mode of Embodiment
How is a feeling of social or personal space achieved?	What is the impact of liveness on the narrative event?	What is the impact of liveness on audiences?	How does embodiment create meaning?
Proximal: Exaggeration of delivery & presentation style	Synchronous: Slower pacing & aesthetic of unfinished spontaneity	Synchronous: Smaller audience base; promotes perceived uniqueness	Human Enactment: Iconic; promotes more "natural" narratives
Remote: technological sensory amplification	Asynchronous: Rapid pacing & combination of elements	Asynchronous: Mass audience; promotes "shared" experience	Avatar Enactment: Symbolic; promotes abstract or symbolic narratives
Shared: Interaction & agency	Emergent: Character perspective agency	Emergent: Mass audience; comparison of experience	

Figure 3: Impact of the features of theatrical mediations

As this table illustrates, not only are there clear parallels between different forms of theatrical mediation, but many of the differences between them can be attributed to the nature of the medium of presentation along these three axes. This is important because it not only allows us to understand different forms of expression in comparison with other mediated forms, but also opens the door to the use of a much wider range of theoretical and historical interpretations of performance across what is often considered to be separate disciplines. Not only can theories of stage theatre be applied to other forms of theatrical mediation, but many media theories have significant potential to explain elements of performance. This intersection of disciplinary theories is key for the expansion of our knowledge of theatrical mediations in general. But it also leads us toward formulating a theory of theatrical mediations as the different aspects of the taxonomy that follows from this position allows us to take a predictive approach to emerging forms of theatrical mediation such as virtual theatre.

These theatrical mediations have already been positioned in the ways that they belong to the different categories of the theatrical mediation taxonomy. But the short history of virtual theatre means that the conventions that govern their performance are

not well defined. If they are to be theoretically valid, the categories identified in the taxonomy should enable us to make predictions about the most effective ways of creating theatrical expression in this particular form. Virtual theatre performances, as defined in this thesis, are spatially remote, but temporally live and make use of visual avatars to enact the characters. If the observations above are valid, what direction would the emerging conventions of virtual theatre take, and how well do these predictive models match with existing examples?

The spatial conventions of virtual theatre are still evolving. All virtual theatre performances are remote, but increasingly, shared spaces are being used, allowing for the embodiment of audience members as well. The virtual performance platform, UpStage, is a 2D chat program that has performance-oriented animation tools available for performers. The chat window itself highlights the importance of agency pointed out by Murray (1997), even though the audience is not directly implicated in the performance itself. Spectators are able to chat during the performance, but are not embodied in the performance space, putting them on a different level than the performers. As can be seen in the examples used by Jamieson & Smith's analysis of UpStage performance (2013), most UpStage performances occur in the equivalent of a medium shot: full character avatars are visible on screen and each generally takes up roughly 15-30% of the space available on screen. The use of much closer shots to create intimacy and presence in other remote theatrical mediations suggests that such techniques could be effectively used in virtual theatre events. Further artistic experimentation outside the scope of this thesis is required to test this idea and validate this particular prediction of the taxonomy. The implementation of such strategies in UpStage would be very challenging at this point in time, but would represent a significant expansion of the creative flexibility of this platform.

Many virtual theatre performances allow the audience into their performance spaces, calling on strategies that are typical of theatrical mediations that use shared spaces. An increase in the use of shared virtual worlds and multi-user video games provides creators with easy ways of creating shared narrative environments. There is also a strong convention of interactivity when people are using computers (Murray, 1997), and because audiences for virtual theatre performances are generally very

technically literate, this convention becomes an expectation when they are engaged in other forms of online entertainment as well. The conventions of theatrical mediations with shared narrative spaces are important considerations for virtual theatre. The spaces and narrative must be flexible enough to allow for audience interaction without undermining the direction and significance of the narrative. Such spaces usually highlight narrative elements in the spatial design itself, giving audience members clues about narrative expectations through subtle choices in the spatial construction (Jenkins, 2004). It is also very common to visually differentiate audience members from performers. Punchdrunk has audience members wear masks as indicators that they exist outside the fiction, allowing them to move through the narrative space without interfering with the performance itself (Machon, 2013). Such techniques for inviting audiences to interact with the narrative space while maintaining spectatorial distance from the event is an important strategy in theatrical mediations that use shared spaces, and provides useful directions for emphasising performance and theatricality in virtual theatre.

That virtual theatre seems to be evolving in this direction shows the power that interactivity has in digital culture and provides further cues for virtual theatre performers about strategies that may be used to enhance the form. Many virtual theatre performances attempt to replicate spatial designs from stage theatre, providing virtual audience spaces which allow audiences to seat their avatars in order to experience the performance. These audience spaces take advantage of established spectatorial behaviours learned through both stage theatre and film spectatorship.

On the second axis of the taxonomy, virtual theatre performances are live, which has significant implications for theatrical aesthetics and production. As suggested by this aspect, the pacing of virtual theatre performances tends to be relatively slow and they make use of fewer separate settings. Most virtual theatre performances only use one fictional space, and those that use more tend to use them sequentially rather than alternating between them. This aesthetic of simplicity echoes techniques used in televised live events (or those which are shot to appear live), which use much simpler camera work and editing than their pre-recorded counterparts (Crisell, 2012). Much as live or as-live television uses this aesthetic simplicity to reinforce its liveness (Crisell,

2012), virtual theatre productions often intentionally make use of a “low-tech, D.I.Y. open source aesthetic” (Jamieson, 2008, p. 28). As with television (Crisell, 2012), the reasons for these limitations are partly technical (Jamieson, 2008), but they help to reinforce the accessible liveness of the virtual theatre event.

Another technique that is commonly used in theatrical mediations that are live yet remote is to show audience members to each other. Live or as-live televised events frequently show shots of their on-site audiences to reinforce the synchronous nature of the broadcast (Crisell, 2012). This function can be observed in virtual theatre as well, for example with the audience live chat window in UpStage. By allowing audience members to interact directly, virtual theatre performances emphasise the synchronous nature of the event, benefiting from the cultural value of authenticity that is often associated with liveness (Crisell, 2012).

Synchronous presentation can also act as a limiting factor for theatrical mediations. As with stage theatre, the liveness of virtual theatre precludes the scale of audiences that are accessible for film or video games. Because of the technical limits of some platforms, virtual theatre productions are often limited to individual audiences of fewer than 50 people. While it could be argued that this helps provide virtual theatre with a sense of exclusivity, the smaller audience size represents a significant barrier to the financial viability of virtual theatre (as it does for most synchronous theatrical mediations).

Looking at the final determinant, virtual theatre performances make use of virtual avatars to enact characters. Like puppets, these avatars can take many different forms depending on the software used for the performance. Both 2D and 3D avatars are used, with a wide range of aesthetic approaches to their creation. As would be expected from their use of virtual avatars, these avatars are often abstract and take advantage of the digital medium by being explicitly non-realistic, often taking forms that would be very difficult to accomplish in physical media. As a result, many creators of live online performances prefer to make non-narrative work which falls outside the scope of this investigation. There is a huge range of narrative approaches in virtual theatre and it is impossible at this stage to discern true tendencies in the emergence of virtual theatre

narrative. If the patterns that govern other forms of avatar-based theatrical mediation hold, it is likely that we will see more narratives that emphasise more symbolic elements. In this particular aspect, it is too early to tell whether or not virtual theatre conforms to the tendencies seen in other avatar-based performances.

2.5 Understanding Theatrical Mediations

As this chapter illustrates, re-evaluating stage theatre as a medium forces us toward a new understanding of the diversity of theatricality. Previous analyses of theatrical ontology and semiotics (especially Esslin, 1991[1987]) reveal the factor that unites theatrical mediations: narrative conveyed through the enactment of characters. This common aspect of all theatrical mediations allows for a detailed and theoretically productive re-interpretation of theatricality which broadens our ability to understand and analyse a variety of different theatrical media.

This theoretical framework has led to a taxonomy which identifies three key features of theatrical mediations which help define the aesthetics, narrative structure and audience experiences. The way that a particular medium treats the theatrical event on three axes – spatial proximity, live presentation and mode of embodiment – provides an important analytical lens for researchers. By facilitating the comparative analysis of theatrical mediations, the theoretical and ideological barriers that divide theatrical mediations into separate disciplines can be broken down and our understanding of all of these forms can be enriched. The primary advantage of this taxonomy for researchers is that it provides a framework for using theories based on one theatrical mediation to analyse others.

The taxonomy also has predictive value and can be used to understand and provide theoretical context to emerging art forms such as virtual theatre. In this way, it has applications for creators as well, acting as a guide for artistic experimentation. As a tool, it can work in two directions. First, it can provide creators experimenting with a new medium a better sense of the medium's properties and its suitability for different kinds of theatrical expression. Second, it can give creators the opportunity to challenge the conventions of their chosen form by understanding the underlying reasons for the

production conventions that frame that particular form of theatrical mediation. In either case, it effectively provides context that encourages artistic experimentation.

There is a significant amount of work still to be done in validating and testing the theories presented in this chapter. For the most part, this work is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the ideas here represent a significant area for future research. In this work, this theoretical framework provides the basis for an interdisciplinary theoretical analysis of virtual theatre. This thesis will aim to expand on the impact of interactivity and liveness on audience experience by understanding the importance of audience preparation. The theoretical and experimental exploration of this aspect will provide validation for this taxonomy and help us understand virtual theatre as an emerging form of theatrical mediation.

Chapter 3. Copresence Effects

The word “copresence” is relatively recent, its origins usually traced to the work of Erwin Goffman on social interaction (Nowak, 2001; Ijsselstein, 2005). Goffman defines copresence as the feeling that “the other is ‘within range’” (1963, p. 17). When the conditions for copresence are met, people become “uniquely accessible, available and subject to one another” (Goffman, 1963, p. 22). Goffman’s definition is useful in this context because of it relies on both sensory perception (1963, p. 17), interpersonal cues such as eye contact (p. 92), and the social contexts

in which the interaction takes place (p. 46 & 196). Goffman also positions feelings of copresence as being cognitive constructs of the person perceiving rather than as a property that an individual has and transmits, allowing for easier integration with theories from theatrical, media studies and cognitive approaches to copresence. Within this context, a broader understanding of the importance and relevance of copresence can be constructed.

In our everyday lives, our feelings of copresence are vital elements of our understanding of the social world which surrounds us. Copresence is perceived differently depending on relative social status (Goffman, 1963; Schechner, 2003), the

Chapter Contents

- 3.1 Defining copresence
 - 3.1.1 Media studies copresence terminology
 - 3.1.2 Theatrical copresence terminology
 - 3.1.3 Copresence as unifying term
- 3.2 Studies of Mediated Copresence
 - 3.2.1 Media studies approaches to copresence
 - 3.2.2 Theatre studies approaches to copresence
- 3.3 Copresence Effects
 - 3.3.1 Copresence effects and theatrical mediation
 - 3.3.2 Copresence effects and the book problem
- 3.4 Studying Copresence Effects: Research Implications

location in which the interaction takes place (Goffman, 1963; Barker, 1968), and the mediation of the sensory experience (Goffman, 1963; Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). Philosophical examinations of human experience also echo many of these observations about copresence. Heidegger's concept of *mitsein* (literally with-being) is presented as being at the foundation of our perceptions of the world around us (1962). Like Goffman, Heidegger emphasizes the importance of openness, proximity and familiarity as essential elements of our connections with other people (1962, pp. 156-162). Sartre's approach to intersubjectivity and otherness also echoes Goffman's copresence, in particular in its emphasis on the gaze as the cornerstone of human connection and his emphasis on the contexts of the connection (1964).

In their approach to copresence, media studies and theatre studies draw on different aspects of copresence to construct models of interpersonal creation to fit their priorities. Media studies looks primarily at the impact of sensory perception and media fidelity on copresence. Because many media theorists take a positivist approach to copresence, they use terminology like *telepresence* and *social presence*. Their approach is further typified by an emphasis on the fidelity of visual and auditory communication as a determining factor of copresence. Theatre studies, on the other hand, emphasize emotional reaction and social relativism when discussing copresence. The terminology favoured in this area refers to *aura* or *charisma* to describe the copresence relationship between actors and audiences. A close look at common terminology and definitions in media studies and theatre studies reveals that the theoretical approaches used are not that different. Indeed, certain formulations of the concept of *copresence* can reconcile the differences between the theoretical frameworks used in media studies and theatre studies.

In an attempt to further reconcile these two disparate approaches to copresence, I will draw on and extend the work of theatre and performance scholar Josette Féral. In her 2012 article, *How to define presence effects: the work of Janet Cardiff*, Féral explores the work of Janet Cardiff, focusing on the ways in which it creates sensations of presence and copresence for its audiences. The new concept of "presence effects" is central to Féral's analysis. Presence effects are artistic or technological illusions which cause the viewer to treat a non-present object or individual as being real on an

instinctive level (Féral, 2012). By combining perceptual and contextual approaches to presence, the concept of presence effects provides an effective framework for reconciling media studies and theatre studies approaches to presence. In this chapter, I will redirect the concept slightly to look at “copresence effects” and the ways in which people can be led to feel that someone is “within reach” even though they may be far away. By looking at copresence effects, the discussion of how to connect people in mediated environments shifts, with significant methodological and theoretical implications for the study of audiences’ reactions to theatrical mediations and any other form of mediated interpersonal communication.

3.1 Defining copresence

While Goffman’s definition of copresence (finding that someone is within reach) is clear, the lexical field for discussing interpersonal connection is very complex. Goffman’s neologism simply adds the prefix *co-* to the concept of presence, changing its focus from that of “being there” to “being there together” (Schroeder, 2011). However, in doing so, Goffman’s concept retains the complexity and lexical ambiguity of the concept of “presence” as well.

Linguistically, the word “presence” is very complex. The prefix *pre-* usually indicates “before,” in both the physical and temporal sense of the word. The root of the word comes from the Latin *esse* meaning “to be.” Finally, the suffix *-ence* designates a quality or state of an object. From a purely linguistic perspective, then, presence can be defined as “the state of being before,” a direct reflection of the connection between ourselves and the world we live in. As such, “presence” has been intimately connected with both literal and more metaphysical explorations of human experience. Its long history is also the cause of lexical ambiguity, as additional highly specialized meanings of this term have made the term significantly more complex. This complexity is very clear in translation, where the network of meanings expressed by the single English word “presence” require dozens of equivalences in many languages.

Perhaps because of the ambiguity of the term “presence,” many theorists have chosen to use other terms to describe aspects of this phenomenon. For instance, Walter

Benjamin uses the term “aura” to describe the connection between audiences and actors or artworks (Benjamin, 1936/1986), while Derrida used the Greek term *parousia* (Derrida, 1978 [1967]), while theatrical studies speak of an actor’s “charisma” (Schechner, 2003). Heidegger’s neologisms *mitsein* [literally: with-being] and *mitdasein* [literally: with-there-being] are also informative in the ways in which they break down our connection with others and the world (Heidegger, 1962). Creatively extending Goffman’s terminology, Zhao’s (2003) taxonomy of copresence proposed corporeal, virtual and hypervirtual categorizations of both *copresence* and *telecopresence*. Other approaches to mediated interactions prefer the use of “social presence” to copresence, although the two terms are often used interchangeably in this field. While the linguistic strategies used by each of these authors may have simplified their individual tasks, the steady accumulation of scholarly synonyms has made a comprehensive approach to understanding copresence quite challenging.

For the sake of simplicity and consistency, this exploration use Goffman’s term “copresence” along with his definition: the feeling that “the other is ‘within range’” (1963, p. 17). Where other concepts differ from this definition in significant ways, they will be mentioned, but in most cases, the phenomena that are observed by the various approaches to interpersonal connection can be productively subsumed under this single term. By gathering this wide diversity of terms under this one conceptual heading, an analysis can be provided which takes into account the complexity and subtlety of copresence.

3.1.1 Media studies copresence terminology

Studies of presence in media have developed a complex network of terms to designate different aspects of presence in mediated environments. In their review of definitions in presence literature, Lombard & Ditton divide presence research into those two categories: physical presence and social presence (1997), a distinction which still holds in mediated presence research. The origins of this lexicon can be found by looking at two early explorations of “telepresence” and “social presence.” With the subsequent explosion of terminology in media studies, we can start to understand the ways in which the terminology has shaped presence research.

The term “telepresence” was popularized by Minsky in 1980, and referred originally to an operator’s sense of being physically present at the location of a teleoperated robot (Ijsselsteijn, 2005). As Manovich points out, the key to this conception of telepresence is that of anti-presence: “I do not have to be physically present in a location to affect reality at this location” (2001, p. 167). Soon after, Minsky’s term was coopted by those working in videoconferencing and virtual environments, and began to refer to the feeling of being remotely present in these mediated environments as well. In reaction to this, Sheridan distinguished between “virtual presence” in virtual environments while using “telepresence” within the context of telerobotics (1992). In spite of this distinction, “telepresence” commonly refers to feelings of being present in remote physical spaces as well as virtual ones. Manovich (2002) proposed using “teleaction” to refer to the phenomenon originally described by Minsky as a way of avoiding the lexical confusion which has developed around the term “telepresence.” To add to this confusion, many publications, such as the journal *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*, have taken to shortening “telepresence” to “presence” in its articles.

The slippery nature of “telepresence” has led other scholars to create new terminology to clarify the scope of their research. The concepts of “physical presence” (Lombard & Ditton, 1997) and “spatial presence” (Lessiter, Freeman, Keogh & Davidoff, 2001; Schubert, Friedmann & Regenbrecht, 2001) both designate sensations of physically being in virtual spaces or remote physical spaces. Together with Sheridan’s “virtual presence” and “telepresence,” they are used in the majority of writing on the topic, although “spatial presence” seems to be more widely used than the other constructions. Accordingly, “spatial presence” will be used to refer to feelings of being present in a remote location in this thesis.

Further complicating this lexical field is the concept of perceptual immersion, which refers to the degree to which the sensory stimuli of a technological system replace and replicate those of the real world (Ijsselsteijn, 2005). While this is widely seen as being an important element of the creation of spatial presence, most researchers are careful to distinguish between these two concepts. For many researchers, spatial presence “can be conceptualized as the *experiential counterpart* of immersion – the

human response” (Ijsselsteijn, 2003, p. 18). The most frequently cited definition of presence in media studies, “the perceptual illusion of nonmediation” (Lombard & Ditton, 1997, *Presence Explicated*), reflects this distinction clearly. As spatial presence is related to the human experience of these systems, cognitive elements of perception such as contextual interpretation and engagement are increasingly being used to model users’ sensations of spatial presence. Although an increasing reliance on cognitive models of spatial presence is changing the focus of research somewhat, there is still a strong reliance in the literature on perceptual realism and fidelity as determinants of spatial presence.

The second origin point for understanding mediated studies of presence is Short, Williams & Christie’s 1976 book, *The Social Psychology of Telecommunications*. The studies published in this book are most important for their use of the term “social presence” to describe people’s feelings of connection with each other. They define social presence as “the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and... of the interpersonal relationships” (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976, p. 65). The authors considered that the most important element of social presence in a medium was its ability to convey the subtleties of human interaction such as voice, body language and facial expression (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). For the most part, their experiments looked at media fidelity, and most of their experiments found correlations between media fidelity and social presence. Because of this, realism and fidelity have become central to social presence research.

Although Goffman’s conception of copresence limited it to interactions taking place in common physical spaces, it has also been applied to mediated interactions as well. Initially, copresence had two distinct definitions within the study of mediated presence. Some scholars used it as a way of talking about the dimension of human experience; where social presence was seen as a property of the medium, copresence was a result of how people perceived the environment and interactions (Nowak & Biocca, 2003). Others defined it as the mid-point between social presence and physical presence, representing experiences of connection with virtual / distant locations and people (Ijsselsteijn, 2005). In general, copresence and social presence have become more or less synonymous in the media studies literature, with copresence becoming

more frequently used. While Goffman's definition of copresence remains a touchstone in defining copresence, it has become radically simplified within the field of mediated presence research. Copresence is the perceived sensation of being there together (Schroeder, 2011).

3.1.2 Theatrical copresence terminology

The connection experienced between actors and audience members has long been a preoccupation of theatre scholars, and has become central to the debate about theatrical mediation in the 20th and 21st centuries. When talking about stage theatre, "presence" is used to describe the sense of connection between audience and performer. This general definition is also used in theoretical studies of stage theatre, film and other theatrical mediations, although the emphasis placed on certain aspects of presence does change depending on the goals of the writer. In his analysis of presence theory in staged theatre, Cormac Power identified three common approaches: making-present, having presence and being-present (2008). The theories underlying these categories will be analysed in more detail later in this chapter, but their foundational definitions are relevant to the present discussion.

The first of Power's categories, presence as making-present, is at the core of theatrical representation. In this instance, the presence referred to is that of the character, who is incarnated on stage by the actor (2008). This enactment is what differentiates theatrical mediations from other forms of narrative and what makes theatrical uses of media unique. Since this form of presence is tied directly to the believable enactment of character, it has been written about in relation to other forms of theatrical mediation, such as film (Smith, 1995; Bordwell, 1989), puppetry and animation (Bolton, 2002), and video games (Murray, 1997). In the context of technologically mediated theatre, authors often refer to character engagement (Smith, 1995) or believability (Mateas & Sengers, 2002) when talking about the connection between audiences and characters. Regardless of the terminology, if characters do not seem present to audiences, spectators' level of engagement and involvement in the narrative is limited.

An actor's stage presence or charisma is encompassed by Power's second category, having presence. While the term "presence" is commonly used in this context, "charisma" or "aura" is often used to express the seemingly magical ability of actors on stage to attract and keep the audience's attention (Power, 1995). Frequently, this form of presence is used to differentiate stage theatre from other forms of theatrical mediation, and writing about theatrical mediations reflects this tendency. Early film theory reflects the idea that this form of presence (Bazin, 2009) or aura (Benjamin, 1936/1986) would be lost in film, although more recent film theory has called this assumption into question (Smith, 1995; Drake, 2006). Frequently, this form of presence is seen as originating with an actor's ability to convey sincerity and authenticity.

Power's final category of presence, being-present, is the most closely related to the media studies approach. In this case, presence simply refers to audiences being in the same room at the same time as the performance as it unfolds (Power, 1995). Presence as being-present has its roots in performance art's rejection of illusion and its search for authenticity in staged performances (Power, 1995). In a more technological vein, Auslander refers to being-present as "liveness," exploring its importance for various forms of theatrical mediation (Auslander, 2008). This use of presence in theatre also echoes Goffman's emphasis on sensory feedback and proximity in his writings about copresence (1963). Because its emphasis on realism and sensory experience parallels concerns in media studies, presence as being-present provides an interesting bridge between theatre and media studies.

All three of these definitions of presence are very closely linked to Goffman's copresence. In particular, making-present and having presence (Power, 2008) reflect the sensation that the other is "within reach," focusing audience's attention on either the character or the actor. Being-present (Power, 2008) is more closely related to the sensory side of Goffman's definition of copresence. While the scope of Power's analysis is limited to staged theatre, similar concepts are used in explaining other forms of theatrical mediation, although the specific terminology often changes depending on the discipline. It is clear, however, that Goffman's "copresence" is at the core of theories of theatrical presence.

3.1.3 Copresence as unifying term

The purpose of unpacking copresence terminology here is two-fold. First, I seek to create a common terminological ground in which discussions of copresence can take place across different disciplines. While recognizing that each field has its own vocabulary to talk about copresence, having a singular concept to use in either field is essential for interdisciplinary work. Goffman's definition serves extremely well here, as it has significant overlap with the work of media theorists as well as the concepts used to explain audience reception in theatrical mediations. This allows for effective comparisons between theatrical and media studies approaches to copresence. Second, it simplifies the process of writing about this complex concept. Using a single concept – copresence – the focus can be kept on the analytical part of this thesis, thus clarifying the contributions to research inherent in this analysis. Accordingly, I will be using the concept of “copresence” as defined by Goffman (1963) throughout this thesis in order to describe people's sensation of being together – of finding the other “within reach” (1963, p. 17).

3.2 Studies of Mediated Copresence

While it does not occupy as important a place in the media cognition literature as physical presence, there is a significant body of work regarding copresence in mediated environments. Partly, this is due to the cognitive complexity of copresence in relation to physical presence. The mental models we use to understand constantly shifting social cues are much more complex than those we use to understand the relatively simple physical cues provided to us by our environment. This complexity makes it much more difficult to measure copresence, especially in the methodology of psychological experimentation used by most of these studies. As a result, most studies of mediated copresence simply ask their participants about their feelings of copresence (usually using simple Likert questionnaires). Using questionnaires focused on media realism to understand mediated copresence introduces significant bias into the ways in which copresence itself is understood in this field. In spite of this, a detailed look at the findings of mediated copresence research illustrates many important aspects of social cognition which are central to our understanding of our mediated interactions. While these findings

often focus on media resolution (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976), cognitive aspects such as immersion (Ijsselstein, 2005), engagement (Riva, Waterworth & Mantonavi, 2011), the suspension of disbelief (Lombard & Ditton, 1997) and users' experience of flow (Hartman, Klimmt & Vorderer, 2010) have become important aspects of this understanding of copresence.

Copresence is also an essential concept in studies of stage theatre, with many theorists weighing in on its impacts and implications. In particular, the feelings of copresence between actors and audiences are the subject of much study (Power, 2008). The presence of actors on stage is primarily used to differentiate stage theatre from film, using this as the basis of an argument that stage theatre is pure and unmediated (Power, 2008). Where media studies focuses its analysis on the sensory elements of copresence, theatre tends to focus on emotion and interpretation. The analysis of theatrical approaches to copresence here will start to unpack the ways in which these differences in emphasis might be integrated into a coherent model of copresence across media.

3.2.1 Media studies approaches to copresence

The first experimental study of mediated copresence was published in *The Social Psychology of Telecommunications* (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976) with the goal of assessing new audio and video communication technologies. Participants interacted with different forms of mediated communication involving different degrees of written, auditory and visual mediation. Subsequently, they were asked to describe the medium using a series of semantic differentiation questions (Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). These experiments found that those media which transmitted more aspects of normal face-to-face communication were perceived as having more copresence; communication by video and audio was seen as more effective than communication using audio alone (1976). The measured difference between media was also much stronger than social factors such as attractiveness or authority, although these also had some effect on perceptions of copresence (1976). Based on their experimental findings, Short, Williams & Christie concluded that realism and sensory detail were the most

important elements determining how much copresence could be felt in mediated communication (1976).

The importance of sensory realism advanced by Short, Williams & Christie (1976) has been tremendously influential for subsequent studies of mediated copresence. Many studies limited their object of studies to comparisons of measurably different media in order to establish theoretical validity (Biocca, 2001). There have been a large number of studies evaluating quantifiable differences in the physical capacity of media, such as the effect of screen size or resolution (Bracken & Botta, 2010) or the relative importance of audio and video input (Sallnas, 2005). Because of the challenges inherent in measuring copresence directly, these studies used questionnaires designed to illicit participants' impressions of their social interactions. The design of the questionnaires is very similar to those used by Short, Williams & Christie (1976), and the results frequently reflected similar conclusions to that early study. This has led to significant bias in the results of such studies as well as some important theoretical challenges within this field.

Embodiment has also been studied extensively, both from the perspective of analyzing the role of avatar design but also looking at the level of embodiment used to control online interactions. For instance, Westerman & Skalski examined how emoticons function as basic surrogates for the facial expression of communicators, allowing them to feel more connected in e-mail or chat communication (2010). Studies of avatars in virtual space have tested several aspects of the relationship between avatar and user, such as avatar realism (Nowak & Biocca, 2003), similarities in appearance between avatars and the users (Yee & Bailenson, 2007), and the importance of avatar gaze to online interactions (Bailenson, Beall, Blascovich, Loomis & Turk, 2005). Most of these experiments used Likert scale questionnaires focused on media realism and believability. In spite of this, several of the studies found that certain levels of abstraction (in particular those which facilitated emotional understanding) were effective at creating feelings of copresence in certain situations.

Studies of media fidelity in television and film also highlight the importance of context in creating feelings of copresence and presence for viewers. In their study

“Telepresence and Television,” Bracken & Botta explored the impact of screen size, resolution and content on audience’s self-reported feelings of presence (2010). They found that while reported immersion and perceptual realism improved with increased resolution when they were showing an action film, the opposite was true when a soap opera was shown (2010). The authors identify both genre and filming style as important considerations here suggesting that films created for larger screens are more effective there because of the use of different filming and narrative pacing techniques (2010). The relationship between content and media effects is still not well understood, but there is starting to be sufficient evidence to conclude that media fidelity alone is not enough to explain our sense of presence and copresence as viewers.

In her thesis about online social interaction, Maia Garau suggests that people use a combination of visual and behavioural cues to determine frameworks for social interaction (2003). Specifically, Garau suggests that there may be “a need for consistency between the visual appearance of the avatar and the type of behavior that it exhibits” (2003, p. 162). In Nowak & Biocca’s study of the role of anthropomorphism (visual fidelity) in users’ feelings of copresence, it was found that less anthropomorphic avatars often enhanced copresence (2003). Garau (2003) suggests that this finding may be due to the highly contrived interaction between avatars in Nowak & Biocca’s (2003) experimental design. The type of interaction users were engaged in may simply have been more suited to the more abstract avatar design. Later experiments focused on variations on naturalistic behavioural cues, using a model that Bailenson calls “transformed social interaction” (2006). Much of this research has focused on the importance of gaze and eye contact, and augmentations to realistic gaze patterns has proven very effective at creating feelings of copresence (Yee & Bailenson, 2007; Bailenson et al 2005). The work by Bailenson and Nowak suggest that Garau’s interpretation of online social interaction may be correct, and that realism is less important to the creation of copresence in virtual environments than understandable and aesthetically consistent expressions of interpersonal cues.

Identifying the impact of content and context is made more difficult because of the methodological decisions made by researchers. The assumption behind many of these studies is that increases in realism leads directly to increases in reported

copresence. This has a significant impact not only on their interpretation of results, but in the creation of the measurement tools themselves. Nowak & Biocca used a Likert questionnaire as the basis of their research, which includes 6 items designed to measure “social presence” (2003). Three of these items asked directly about the perceived realism of the experience:

“To what extent was this like a face-to-face meeting?

To what extent was this like you were in the same room with your partner?

To what extent did your partner seem “real”?” (Nowak & Biocca, 2003, p. 487)

Similar questions can be found in most other studies of copresence as well. The influential presence questionnaire created by Lombard, Ditton et al included a social reality scale, which consisted of questions “related to comparisons between how the portrayed events would or could occur in the nonmediated world” (Lombard, et al, 2000, p. 9). Once statistical analyses combined the answers to these questions with others about copresence, users’ judgment of the realism of the interface becomes embedded within their reported sense of copresence, reinforcing the importance of media fidelity as a determining factor for copresence.

In spite of the inherent bias of the measurement tools, results which question the presumed connection between realism and presence are relatively frequent. But rather than questioning whether or not realism is indeed a determinant of copresence, authors try to reinterpret the results in order to remain consistent with the established theoretical position. Authors frequently go out of their way to explain how confounding effects caused the anomalous results (for example, Bracken & Botta, 2010). Others divide non-realistic elements into those which detract from an experience and those which enhance it, terming these non-realistic phenomena “augmented” (Bailenson et al, 2005), “transformed” (Bailenson, 2006), or “hyper-real” (Ijsselsteijn, 2003, p. 19). The impact of user experience on media also plays a prominent role, although its impact is still unclear. Ijsselsteijn posits that when people have knowledge of a particular medium, they create “media schemata” (2003, p. 37) which lessens the impact of illusion in that medium for them. On the other hand, familiarity with an interface is often seen as important for enhancing feelings of copresence (Davide & Walker, 2003). The steps taken to explain

study results which do not conform to the assumption that increases in realism only serve to highlight the problematic nature of the assumption that media realism is correlated to feelings of copresence.

Perhaps the most compelling illustration of this is what mediated presence researchers call *the book problem*. This refers to the finding in many experiments that books – a medium with very little capacity for sensory realism – were often reported as having more presence and copresence than more complex virtual environments (Biocca, 2003; Ijsselstein, 2003; Jones, 2008). Solutions to this problem are proposed by current cognitive and neurological research and their applications to mediated presence research.

The most common approach to the book problem focuses on the cognitive processes closely associated with perception. Automatic cognitive processes such as schemata are often cited as important elements, as they account for many of the subjective shifts in perception seen in presence research (Pinchbeck & Stevens, 2005). Some research has posited an evolutionary advantage to being able to imagine oneself as being elsewhere, using an additional layer of “mental imagery space” (Biocca, 2003, p. 5) to express our ability to vividly imagine places we have never been to, including those described in books. In this model, people use mental imagery to fill in the gaps in the information provided by the book, thus allowing themselves to feel present within the fictional story. This model is reinforced by Davide & Walker’s finding that simplification is the most effective technique for increasing reports of presence (2003). Hartman, Klimmt & Vorderer further suggest mental imagery becomes a much more important component of presence when users engage in a willing suspension of disbelief about an event or environment (2010), a sentiment echoed by Jones who emphasizes the importance of effective narrative content and user enjoyment (2008). These approaches to presence focus on interpretation in ways which are very similar to theories of imaginative or content-based immersion.

This cognitive model is further supported by neurological research into the role of imagination in involvement and intersubjectivity. Theories of mental simulation or emulation are important in this regard. Neurological research has shown, for instance,

that the same areas of the brain are activated when we execute an action as when we imagine it taking place (Turner, 2013). Mental simulations therefore have a lot of power to change and affect our perceptions, especially of complex social experiences such as copresence. Riva has also theorized that mirror neurons are responsible for our ability to predict social consequences and, therefore, in our ability to create copresent social connections (2009). That mirror neurons are tied most closely to the execution and observation of purposeful actions (Riva, 2009) further suggests that properly motivated and effective content plays an important role in the activation of this neurological system in virtual environments.

Taken as a whole, research into the cognitive and neurological underpinnings of presence and copresence raises doubts about the sufficiency of the current model based on realistic sensory experiences. Several researchers have acknowledged this necessity and started creating more complex models of our experiences of copresence, integrating such concepts as simulation (Turner, 2013) and imagination (Biocca, 2003). Copresence research in particular has shown an increasing emphasis on perceptions of agency (Herrera, Jordan & Vera, 2006; Nowak & Biocca, 2003) and behavioural patterns (Bailenson, Yee, Merget & Schroeder, 2006). Contrary to physical presence, many studies of copresence have found that increases in graphical detail, visual realism and behavioral realism lead to decreases of copresence, opening the possibility that while additional complexity helps immerse users, it is counterproductive for feelings of copresence (Schroeder, 2011). While these observations have been raised as significant in the copresence literature, there are not yet any comprehensive theories which address the complexities that have emerged from the published studies. In order to fill some of the gaps in this theoretical structure, this thesis will rely on theatrical theories of presence in order to insert a distinct perspective into the discussion.

3.2.2 Theatre studies approaches to copresence

Copresence is a central concern for theatrical theorists even in the earliest available theatrical writings. Most frequently, theatrical approaches to copresence focus on the spectators' perception of the actors, which is sometimes referred to as charisma (Schechner, 2003) or aura (Benjamin, 1936/1986). Early theatrical theories often

approach this form of copresence as a moral and political issue focused on the ability of actors to use audiences' feelings of copresence to affect their behavior. Even if we only look at classical Greek authors, there are significant differences when it comes to the morality of copresence: Plato sees copresence as being a dangerous, corrupting influence on society (Gadamer, 1980), while Aristotle positions it as essential for catharsis, allowing for the purging of unwanted emotion (Bal, 1982). Regardless of the terminology used, the social relationship between actors and audiences remained a central concern of theatre theorists ever since.

In contemporary theatre, discussions about copresence are inescapable, even colloquial conversations (Erickson, 2006). In spite of this, it remains significantly undertheorized, with many approaching it simply as a magical property of the theatrical event (Power, 2008). Certainly, copresence plays a vital role in the success of a theatrical performance, and is an essential element of audience's ability to empathise and identify with the characters on stage (Blau, 1990). It has also been tied directly to audience engagement with theatrical narrative (Power, 2008) and the effective creation of stage illusion (Ubersfeld, 1981/1996). In its colloquial use, theatrical copresence is usually seen as being a property of an actor, enhanced by technique and training (Power, 2008); we often speak of a particular actor or performance as "having presence." This approach to copresence is very similar to the emphasis in media studies of copresence being a simple property of a medium, but as with media studies, this approach is insufficient for understanding the complexities of how copresence is created and experienced on stage.

Copresence has taken on an increased importance in 20th century, primarily driven by the desire among theatre practitioners and theorists to differentiate stage theatre from film, which co-opted many of theatre's traditional social functions (Singer, 2001). In this sense, copresence takes on a very literal definition, with an actor's copresence only being transmissible if there are no barriers in between the actor and the audience (Power, 2008). This emphasis on the physical and temporal proximity of the actors and audience is further reinforced by early film theory. Benjamin (1936/1986) and Bazin (2009) both remark that the film actor's presence and aura are greatly diminished through the distancing effect of the camera and editing. This change in how we

experience actors' copresence is seen as a side effect of the depersonalization (Bazin, 2009) or commodification (Benjamin, 1936/1986) of film, representing a significant shift in the audience's experience of enacted narrative. Discussions of theatrical ontology have also shifted to account for this view, with the existence of a non-reproduced physical body on stage being described as the single most important element of stage performance (Phelan, 1993). This approach to theatrical copresence is echoed by many prominent theatrical practitioners (e.g. Grotowski, 1971; Kantor, 1993), who use it as a justification of their art form in the face of the threat of obsolescence.

Semiological analyses of the theatrical event provide an effective starting point for attempts to explain rather than simply describe the phenomenon of theatrical copresence. These explorations focus primarily on the context of the theatrical experience. On a primary level, this is related to narrative context and characterization, which define the actor's actions and help to give their actions a greater importance by emphasizing the importance of their actions (Eco, 1977). The emphasis on theatrical context extends beyond that, however, encompassing the spatial and cultural design of the theatrical experience. In his diary, playwright Max Frisch describes a conversation between a stage hand and an actress which took on new layers of meaning because it took place on a stage, which conferred an extra layer of meaning on the words they pronounced (Esslin, 1982). Ubersfeld echoes this by insisting that the framing of objects on the stage creates a more complex semiotic relationship than would otherwise be present, allowing additional layers of meaning to be conveyed to the audience (1999). Audience reaction can thus be understood as part of a much more complex process. Not only are audiences watching and interpreting the event, but their perception of the performance, and by extension the actors performing on stage, is shaped and affected by the context in which it occurs.

Mediation, as one of the contexts of performance, is at the core of theatrical conceptions of copresence. As illustrated in chapter 2, however, stage theatre is also a medium alongside other forms of theatrical mediation. While this is readily apparent in the semiological analysis of theatrical framing, its consequences are significant for our understanding of copresence. Auslander uses mediation to challenge the importance of embodied presence in theatre, arguing that similarities in technique and effect across

media are an indication that live performance does not have an exclusive claim to copresence (2008). Indeed, audiences report feelings of copresence with screen actors as well (Smith, 1995). There are certainly differences in technique between media, but it is very clear that the perception of the actor being copresent is a vital part of all forms of enacted narrative, regardless of the mediation.

As Power points out, the challenge of understanding theatrical copresence lies in not seeing it as being part of the magic of theatre, using it as an overly romantic way of defining theatre's specificity (2008). Power reframes theatrical presence as the process of representing presence on stage, acknowledging the artificiality of stage presence. This mirrors Unterman's contention that both stage presence (2008) and mediated presence (2006) can be understood through the lens of mimesis and representation, as well as Féral's model of artistic presence as an intentionally created effect (2007). Schechner's anthropological analysis of theatrical copresence uses a similar approach, explaining it as a strategic exaggeration of the political or social power of the actor (2003). This conception of theatrical copresence as a complex form of representation is an essential piece to the integration of theatrical models of copresence with approaches drawn from other disciplines.

The debate surrounding the nature of theatrical copresence reveals a profound unease about the nature and cultural significance of the theatrical event. As a defense against the perceived threat of mediation, physical proximity and temporal liveness are often held up as being the source of the copresence which makes stage theatre unique. This point of view is being increasingly challenged by models of theatrical copresence which emphasise its social antecedents, drawn both from semiological studies of theatre (Esslin, 1982; Ubersfeld, 1999) and from anthropological explorations of performance (Schechner, 2003). Through its use of the contextual and staging techniques explored in Chapter 2, stage theatre is able to create sensations of copresence that is significantly stronger than the sensory experience would warrant.

The disconnect between sensory experience and copresence in theatre recalls many of the theoretical challenges faced by media studies approaches to copresence. Theatrical semioticians' use of both content and context to explain copresence and

audience reaction is directly analogous to Garau's insistence that both perceptual and behavioural cues are the key to copresence. If stage theatre is indeed a medium, our goal in this analysis must be to find the mechanism by which copresence is communicated in mediated environments. To accomplish this, I propose the concept of *copresence effects*.

3.3 Copresence Effects

Media studies and theatrical studies approach copresence using very different approaches and underlying assumptions. The conceptual biases of each area limit our understanding of copresence, and have been compounded through historical and methodological precedents which emphasise different aspects of copresence. The context of industrial development and social science methodologies that define media studies have led to a conceptualization of copresence that is based on immediately measurable phenomena. As a result, media studies approaches tend to prioritize the sensory elements of copresence, leading to difficulties accounting for phenomena like the book problem and other situations which minimize the importance of sensory perception in certain conditions. Theatrical theorists recognize the importance of copresence but do a relatively poor job of explaining it, focusing instead on the ways in which copresence shapes audiences' emotional reactions to the performances themselves. This has led to a situation where manifestations of copresence are seen as mystical properties of the theatrical event (Power, 2006). Reconciling the conceptual gaps between media studies and theatre studies gives us the best chance of creating a comprehensive and balanced view of copresence in theatrical mediation. An application of the concept of "presence effects" (Féral, 2012) to copresence allows the experiential approach of theatre studies to be brought reconciled with the sensory focus of traditional media studies.

Presence effects are artistic illusions which cause the viewer to treat a non-present object or person as being real on an instinctive level (Féral, 2012). This is not to say that viewers believe in the actual existence of the object. Presence effects are created from the interplay between knowledge and perception – in the simultaneous existence of reality and imagination. Féral explains presence effects as the result of two

cognitive systems working simultaneously (2012). The careful control of viewers' sensory perception is very important, as it allows them to react to the object on an instinctive, non-intellectual level (Féral, 2012). Sensory illusion alone is not sufficient for the creation of presence effects; there must also be a resonance with the viewer's existing models of the world so that their perception triggers memories and other mental images which fill in any missing details (Féral, 2012). In this model, both aspects of the presence effect must be effective in order for audiences to experience the feelings of presence created by the artist.

The concept of presence effects originated as a way of explaining certain forms of artistic expression, but it corresponds very closely to cognitive approaches to explaining feelings of presence. Sundar, Oeldorf-Hirsch & Garga (2008) point out that cognitive heuristics are used extensively in other aspects of understanding virtual environments, such as navigation. They posit a number of heuristics which compare users' experience of the virtual space with their internalized expectations based on their experience of real world spaces (Sundar, Oeldorf-Hirsch & Garga, 2008). Pinchbeck & Stevens (2005) also stress the importance of heuristics and schemata in the creation of presence, emphasizing how these mental shortcuts allow people to process environments and social contexts with a minimum of effort. Smith's analysis of cinematic audiences is based on a set of criteria for considering a character to be a person referred to as the person schema (1995). In each of these cases, while the creation of virtual or narrative environments is seen as important for creating a sensory experience, cognitive interpretations based on familiarity and learned strategies are an essential part of creating feelings of presence.

Applying Féral's "presence effects" to copresence allows us to reframe our approach to interpersonal connections in theatrical mediations. Focusing on "copresence effects" rather than "copresence" makes the following fundamental assumptions explicit:

1. Copresence effects, as experienced in theatrical mediations, share some elements with but are not the same as everyday copresence. The relationship between copresence and copresence effects is very similar to the relationship between objects and people and their theatrical representations.

2. Copresence effects depend on both external factors (sensory perception) and internal factors (experience and psychology of the individual).
3. Cognitive heuristics and schemata are an important part of creating presence effects. Knowledge of the context of an event allows people to prepare for experiencing presence effects in theatrical mediations, making copresence effects stronger.

Together, these elements lead us toward new ways of understanding copresence effects in mediated communication, using theatrical mediations as our starting point.

Copresence is an important part of our everyday social interactions (Goffman, 1963), and helps shape our social world. The rules underlying the creation of copresence are part of our social expectations as shaped by the contexts that shape our interactions (Goffman, 1963). People are not ordinarily conscious of these rules as they are internalized at a very young age (Goffman, 1963). The subconscious rules that we use to understand social contact are instances of social schemata which are used to ease our interpretation of complex situations. Social schemata allow us to rapidly interpret social situations and determine the most appropriate behaviours for the moment. In turn, we judge people based on how well they conform to our social expectations as defined by our learned schemata. This process is very similar to Smith's *person schema* (1995), which provides a set of criteria for deciding whether a character should be treated like a person. In the application of person schemata to theatrical mediations, whether or not we interpret a character as a person is based on sufficiency, not realism; when observing a character, we analyze how close they come to matching our sensory, behavioral and narrative expectations (1995). If they are close enough to matching expectations based on social schemata and the person schema, audiences are willing to accept character actions as being those of a person and react to them in this way.

The process that Smith describes is directly related to the ways in which theatrical meaning is generated. Theatre and theatrical mediations primarily make use of iconic forms of representation, taking advantage of similarities in appearance between objects used in an event and the fictional objects they are supposed to represent (Rozik,

2008). Mimesis, usually used to describe this kind of fictional representation can be used to define copresence in theatrical and mediated environments as well (Unterman, 2006). Mimesis “establishes a complex relationship between two objects, a model and a copy; it implies at once similarity and difference, identification and transformation, all in a single motion” (Bal, 1972, p. 173). The process of using resemblance to trigger interpretation on the part of the audience is directly analogous to the cognitive process outlined in Smith’s person schema (1995), and that can be used to describe the creation of copresence in theatrical mediation. It also corresponds to theories of mediated presence that emphasise realism as an essential element of creating presence effects. The additional conceptual specificity provided by calling this phenomenon a “copresence effect” provides clarity when approaching mediated interpersonal connections in both theatrical and non-theatrical situations.

The additional specificity that the concept of “copresence effects” brings to our understanding also allows the integration of the internal and external determinants of copresence effects into our model. While the sensory conditions for the creation of copresence effects are relatively well studied, there is a significant gap in the literature surrounding the internal processing that underlies the creation of feelings of copresence. Several significant articles have indicated the importance of the internal aspects of copresence effects, but it remains significantly undertheorized. Lombard & Ditton describe presence as involving “sensory, cognitive, and affective processing systems” (2006, *Presence Explicated*), but nevertheless focus on medium transparency and sensory cues. Likewise, Biocca, Harms & Burgoon (2003) emphasise the importance of the psychological aspect in understanding copresence, but focus their efforts on use of media to create copresence effects and the operationalizing of copresence itself. These two articles are examples of a much wider phenomenon in telepresence and copresence research which focuses on sensory realism as the root cause of copresence phenomena. Both acknowledge the importance of cognition, but it has not been integrated into the theories that try to explain mediated experiences of presence.

Speaking of “copresence effects” explicitly takes both external stimuli and internal interpretation into account. Sensory realism is still an important part of this model, since the sensory experience must be able to trigger the memories and social

schemata that create feelings of copresence. The idea of sufficiency is built into the idea of copresence effects. If a certain set of stimuli is sufficient to trigger these mental operations, then any additional level of realism will not add to the effect. Indeed, in some cases, additional levels of realism may actually diminish the overall effect (Nowak & Biocca, 2003) if they do not correspond to the kinds of interpretive social models being applied by the audience. While this outcome may be surprising when the focus is uniquely on sensory realism, it is at the core of any approach that is based on the interaction between sensory experiences and interpretation.

Finally, since interpretation is an important part of how we experience copresence effects, the way that we prepare for these experiences becomes very important. This aspect of copresence effects is supported by theories of social behavior and cognition. The role of framing in human experience is to shape the rules, scripts and social schemata, allowing us to easily shape our expectations of complex social situations (Goffman, 1963). In addition to sensory experiences, there is an important social aspect to our interactions with others. Barker's analysis of human behavior identifies the importance of setting for establishing and maintaining the social conventions and schemata that facilitate social interaction (1968). Clemence (2001) also points out the importance of normative contexts in shaping our interpretations and actions within social situations. Accepting that interpretation plays an important role in the creation of copresence effects reinforces the importance of addressing a variety of ways that interpretation can be shaped. Sensory realism, while significant, is only one of the many factors that influence the creation of copresence effects.

3.3.1 Copresence effects and theatrical mediation

Seeing theatrical presence as an example of copresence effects challenges the dominant model of character analysis in theatrical mediations. A cognitive approach to copresence effects makes it very difficult to continue to mythologize theatrical presence, a weakness of current approaches (Power, 2008). A conscious recognition of copresence effects does not minimize the importance of copresence for theatrical mediation. On the contrary, copresence effects remain central to these forms of narrative expression. Closer analysis reveals that theatrical mediations make use of complex

strategies that support the creation of copresence effects. Acknowledging these strategies as effective and focused allows a more realistic understanding of theatrical presence.

Understanding theatrical presence as an example of copresence effect echoes Derrida's assertion that theatrical presence is inherently representational (1978). Power further suggests that presence is simply an element of theatrical signification (2008). Theatrical presence seen through this lens is a creative product that can be adjusted, changed and manipulated as part of an individual narrative's aesthetic choices (Power, 2008). Feral's (2012) writing about presence effects comes to a similar conclusion, especially when they are applied to copresence. Theatrical expression has created many very effective ways of creating copresence effects, using architectural strategies, acting technique or creative abstraction (among many other approaches) to create strong copresence effects on stage. Indeed, most of the systems of theatrical signification devised by Esslin (1987) can be understood in ways that tie them directly to the intentional creation of copresence effects using sensory, contextual and interpretive strategies.

Copresence effects are important elements of other forms of theatrical mediation such as puppetry, filmed narrative and video games. Without strong copresence effects, these theatrical mediations would not be able to create the audience involvement and character identification necessary for the creation of compelling narratives (Smith, 1995). The affordances of a given theatrical medium outlined in Chapter 2 impact the strategies used for the creation of copresence effects. The spatial proximity of the performers and audience, the liveness of the performance and the mode of character embodiment all have an important impact on copresence effects. For instance, because filmed narrative is presented to audiences that are not in the same location as the performance, sensory amplification techniques such as close-ups are used in order to bring the characters closer to the audience (Smith, 1995). Video games, on the other hand, allow audiences to control characters in the narrative space and emphasise agency, allowing the player to impact the way the story is told through their actions within the narrative space (Murray, 1997). Through the use of spatial and temporal narrative strategies, medium specificity has a significant impact on the structure of performative narrative and

audience experience. In theatrical mediations (not just stage theatre), production and creation strategies are oriented toward the creation of copresence effects.

Power (2008) suggests using phenomenological or semiotic approaches already used to study other elements of stage theatre to study the intentional creation of presence in theatre. Although they use different philosophical bases, both phenomenology and semiology foreground the role of interpretation in the creation of theatrical meaning. Phenomenological approaches to theatrical presence focus on the ways in which theatre manipulates our perceptions of presence (Garner, 1994). This allows us to become more conscious of our interpretive process in the creation of copresence effects and the strategies used to shape that interpretation. Semiotic approaches to theatre also suggest complexities in the ways that actors are perceived (Rozik, 2008) that help illustrate some of the theatrical techniques behind presence effects. In this way, we can start to perceive the mechanisms behind the creation of copresence effects in theatrical mediations.

Copresence effects provide a conceptual platform to better understand the interplay between narrative strategy and interpretation in theatrical mediations. There is also significant potential for expanding this conceptualization of copresence to non-narrative forms of interpersonal communication. As a result, the concept of copresence effects provides a compelling framework for research into theatrical mediation.

3.3.2 Copresence effects and the book problem

The concept of copresence effects is useful in media studies for integrating different theoretical approaches to interpersonal communication. Specifically, it helps reconcile apparent contradictions in mediated presence theory such as the book problem. The book problem derives from observations that, in many studies of mediated presence, research subjects report a higher level of presence from books than from film or other media that provide a richer sensory experience. If we interpret mediated presence as a case of epistemic failure, this is a very difficult problem to overcome (Floridi, 2005) since increases in sensory realism should be tied to increases in perceived presence. Interpreting mediated copresence as an example of copresence effects accounts for some of these contradictions. First, an analysis of copresence

effects encourages a model of sufficient stimulus rather than realism, which accounts for many of the differences seen in reports of presence and copresence in mediated environments. Second, strategies for creating and understanding copresence effects are medium specific, as each medium triggers a different set of heuristics when it comes to our interpretation of presence.

By emphasizing the interpretive aspect of our experiences of copresence, an analysis focused on copresence effects challenges the fundamental ontology of mediated presence. Copresence effects have their basis in centuries of theatrical tradition and are also consistent with our cognitive models of media use and copresence. In mediated interpersonal communication (of which stage theatre and film are specialized instances), feelings of copresence are often created by things other than intense and realistic depictions of human interaction. The concept of copresence effects treats copresence as yet another aspect of media representation.

The process of representing copresence in media is complex and highly contextual. The application of copresence effects to mediated communication must begin with an acknowledgement that perceptual realism is not the only contextual element that impacts our feelings of copresence. Other elements of mediated social interaction should be considered in creating a cohesive model of mediated copresence effects. For instance, the social and cultural context of an interaction has a significant impact on our reaction to the interaction (McConachie, 2008) and to our feelings of copresence (Goffman, 1963). It is also important in both media studies (Garau, 2003) and in stage theatre studies (Rozik, 2008) that the different elements of communication be coherent for the creation of copresence effects. If the various elements of people's experience of copresence don't come together, they will not experience copresence effects (Feral, 2012). When the different elements of presence and copresence effects do come together, audiences are willing to fill in a lot of details from their own imaginations.

Copresence effects expose one possible explanation of the mechanisms underlying the book problem. Because people know how to react to books and how to interact with them, they are quickly able to become involved with the narrative

experience the book presents. The act of reading triggers readily accessible heuristics about the ways in which the reader must fill in the descriptions in the book with their own imaginations. Their preparation for the reading experience as well as the ways the textual cues work together to shape their imaginations can lead to experiences of presence and copresence. Biocca (2003) suggests that the interaction between virtual space, physical space and mental imagery helps create feelings of presence. The accessibility of interpretation heuristics is also likely important, as several researchers have identified prior experience with a particular medium as an important predictor of presence and copresence effects (Lombard & Ditton, 1997; Ijsselstein, de Ridder, Freeman & Avons, 2000). The accessibility of the heuristics that trigger audiences to fill in the details of mediated experience is an important element for the creation of presence and copresence effects and provides a framework for explaining the book problem.

Copresence effects also account for medium specificity. Our analysis of theatrical mediations clearly show the diversity of techniques used to create copresence effects and advance the narrative. Strong copresence effects are created in staged theatre, puppetry, filmed narrative and video games, but each form of theatrical mediation uses different mechanisms for creating these effects. Some of the differences between these forms of theatrical mediation are aesthetic, but these forms of expression also differ in terms of narrative structure, character embodiment, level of interactivity, and social positioning. Many strategies used for one form of theatrical mediation would be ineffective if used to support other forms.

The lack of any consideration of medium specificity is a serious shortcoming when it comes to existing approaches to testing mediated copresence effects. Because the conventions surrounding virtual environments are not strongly established, it is very difficult to create the effective conditions in which copresence effects will emerge. The different elements of the mediated experience must be carefully designed and presented in order to maximize copresence effects. On the other hand, the conventions and strategies for creating copresence effects with books are already established, and bear some resemblance to the conditions found in university labs, where much of the testing for mediated presence takes place. A comparison between non-narrative virtual reality

environments whose dominant strategies have not yet emerged with narrative text is a false analogy with predictable results: presence is reported at a higher level in books than in virtual reality.

This phenomenon is compounded by the contextual nature of the tools used to test our experiences of presence. In most studies, participants are exposed to an environment, film or book. After this experience, they are asked to rate their experience by responding to a series of questions (usually using a Likert ranking scale or some other subjective self-reporting measure). These measurement scales compare the users' experience of that experience with their previous experiences. The significant question here is: what are participants' comparing their experiences to? Consider the following question, drawn from Nowak & Biocca (2003, p. 487):

“To what extent did you feel like you were inside the environment [?]”

Because the frame of reference is different, feeling like you are “inside the environment” means very different things for someone experiencing virtual reality than for someone reading a book. In answering this question a reader is likely to compare their experience to other books that they have read, emphasizing the imaginative component of immersion. A participant experiencing virtual reality, on the other hand, is more likely to focus on the sensory and technological components of their experience. Even though the same words are being used to ask the question, medium-specific evaluative schema change the criteria used to judge experience.

Recognizing that our experiences of mediated presence are consciously created representational effects provides a framework for understanding these differences. By identifying the aspects of virtual environments that trigger the copresence effects, we will be much closer to being able to create them reliably in virtual theatre performances and other uses of virtual worlds. Research into mediated copresence has shown very clearly that, up to a certain point, sensory realism is important for creating these effects. There is just as clearly gaps in terms of narrative structure and audience preparation that have not been explored because the research focus has been too tightly focused on this single aspect of user experience. The research in this thesis will focus specifically on

audience preparation and priming, but explorations and analyses of other aspects of copresence effects in virtual environments should be explored in future research.

3.4 Studying Copresence Effects: Research Implications

Studying copresence effects in virtual theatre is challenging. The theoretical bases of copresence effects drawn from a number of different fields. Bal (2002) highlights the challenges posed by the interdisciplinary research, specifically in the translation of concepts like copresence effects across disciplinary lines. In this chapter, I have reconciled these definitional issues, and pointed the direction toward the next stages in this dissertation research. An exploration of the contextual elements of copresence effects allows for an exploration of the cognitive and expressive side of a theory of copresence effects in mediated environments. Theatrical mediations, as a specific example of media phenomena, provide an effective frame for advancing this analysis and leveraging the long tradition of copresence research in the theatrical and cinematic literature. The convergence of these disciplines provides the research scope and framework for this research.

The mimetic and cognitive aspects of copresence effects emphasise the importance of context, but this aspect of presence remains undertheorized. Early approaches to copresence also emphasise the importance of context to our perceptions of social interactions (Goffman, 1963; 1974). The lack of research about contextual elements of our experience of presence represents a major gap in knowledge in this area. Theorizing the importance of context for the creation of copresence effects is not without precedent. Early research into social interactions as well as cognitive psychological constructs of framing and schemata provide a theoretical grounding for these contextual elements. Semiotic and sociological studies of theatrical and cinematic exposition also provide important reference points. Finally, a small number of studies of mediated presence and copresence have focused on the importance of context and experience. While these will be explored in more detail in a later chapter, it is important to highlight a few important examples here.

Goffman's approach to copresence emphasized the importance of context. In *Behavior in Public Places* (1963), Goffman pointed out that our feelings of copresence are influenced by the specific social situation as well as the relative social status of the people involved. His later work referred to this phenomenon as framing and emphasized the ways in which social context served to decrease the perceived difficulty of social situations (Goffman, 1974). Framing is particularly useful for triggering patterns of thinking (schemas) or behavior patterns (scripts) particular to a specific situation (Scheufele, 2004). A wide variety of schemas can be triggered by situational variables, including many that are associated with media use (Scheufele, 2004) and narrative interpretations (Smith, 1995). Copresence effects, as triggered schemas of others' presence, are likely reactive to framing and context in very similar ways.

Semiotic approaches to theatrical events arrive at similar conclusions. Esslin (1987) identifies framing and context as important elements in the creation of meaning for theatrical events. For Rozik (2008), framing is an essential element of domain categorization, conveying the knowledge that spectators need to be able to distinguish between theatrical and extra-theatrical aspects of the event. This allows spectators to determine whether or not a particular object is part of the performance and therefore subject to conscious analysis as a theatrical sign (Rozik, 2008). Sauter (2000) likewise describes theatrical context as a way to facilitate the transformation of onlookers into more active spectators. Analyses of theatrical semiotics explain theatrical framing as an important element for changing audience interpretation of the signs presented on stage. This contextual support is needed in order to trigger the kinds of interpretation that audiences need in order to perceive both narrative (Esslin, 1987) and character (Smith, 1995) effectively.

Interpretation and context is an important part of definitions of mediated presence (Lombard & Ditton, 1997; Schroeder, 2006), but there have only been a few studies which explore contextual elements. Jones (2008) found that users exposed to similar (but not identical) material in different media report more presence as do users who have a previous interest in the characters or topics at hand. Ladeira, Nunez & Blake (2005) also reported that users' musical preferences had a significant impact on their sense of presence. Additional studies are needed in order to explore other areas which

have been identified as important aspects of priming, including audience preparation (Pinchbeck & Stevens, 2005), medium familiarity (Ijsselsteijn, 2003) and audience expectations (Hartman, Klimmt & Vorderer, 2010; Lee, 2004). My research in this dissertation aims to address audience preparation and expectations specifically, especially as concerns artistic approaches to creating copresence among virtual theatre audiences. In this way, it represents a major contribution to our understanding of the underlying cognitive and experiential mechanisms that govern mediated copresence effects.

Chapter 4. A Mixed-Methods Approach to Studying Framing

This thesis research draws on theory, data and methodologies from a variety of different fields. Accordingly, a mixed methods approach will be used to approach research into framing effects in virtual theatre. I utilize theoretical

approaches to framing, case studies of existing framing practices and mixed-methods experimental approaches to media framing. The multiple approaches to this research allow for the creation of a rigorous theoretical and practical framework to ensure that the results are reflective of audience experience across a variety of settings and media.

The research into framing for virtual theatre events is here divided into four chapters, each with a specific research focus and methodological approach. Each is designed to meet a specific challenge in the development of a theory of framing and copresence in virtual theatre and to address research concerns raised by academics in the various fields associated with this problem. Taken together, they represent a rigorous approach to understanding the use of framing to create copresence effects in virtual theatre.

- **Chapter 5** reports on the construction of an analytical framework for understanding framing in theatrical mediations. It draws from an extensive cross-disciplinary literature review to create a theoretical model that explores the impact of audience preparation on their experiences in theatrical, cinematic and digital environments.
- **Chapter 6** reports on case studies of local Vancouver theatre companies and reports on their strategic approaches to framing. Information drawn

Chapter Contents

- 4.1 Chapter 5: Framing Theatrical Mediations
- 4.2 Chapter 6: Case Studies in Theatrical Framing
- 4.3 Chapters 7 & 8: Virtual Theatre Framing Experiment

from expert interviews and document analysis contributes to our understanding of framing strategy.

- **Chapter 7** outlines the experimental design process, focusing on the design and implementation of the three experimental framing conditions used in the experiment. The conditions of creation of *The Forgotten Sentry*, the virtual theatre performance at the heart of the experiment, are also outlined here.
- **Chapter 8** reports on the outcome of the experiment into virtual theatre framing. Information was gathered from participants using questionnaires as well as semi-directed interviews.

The details of the methodological approaches for each chapter is detailed below.

4.1 Chapter 5: Framing Theatrical Mediations

Theatre studies and sociological analyses of theatrical and cinematic spectatorship provide clues about the importance of framing in establishing copresence effects. Observational approaches to audience analysis in stage theatre and film are supplemented by cognitive approaches to audience psychology. I compare findings from diverse approaches to audience theory, and use this comparison to construct a theoretical framework to explain how framing affects the creation of copresence effects in theatrical mediations. I use a cross-disciplinary comparative analysis of approaches to audience analysis to identify the common ground between theatrical, psychological and sociological approaches to framing. The goal of Chapter 5 is to identify and operationalize the different aspects of framing which have an impact on the creation of copresence effects.

Sociological approaches to framing are closely connected to the work of Goffman (1963; 1974) and Barker (1968). These studies of human social behavior were conducted using observational techniques. Ethnographic studies of the American Mid-West informed a theory of how the social and physical environment affects people's behaviours (Barker, 1968). Barker theorized the importance of "behavior settings," a combination of physical and social elements which led groups of people to behave in predictable ways within certain contexts (1968). These findings echo Goffman's

approach to copresence. In particular, Goffman showed that copresence is dependent on codified social frameworks (1974) as well as the social rules of a particular situation (1963). Goffman (1974) identifies several strategies that are important for the creation of effective social frames: bracketing in time and space (pp. 251 - 257), role assignment (pp. 257 - 258), cultural considerations (p. 259), internal divisions (pp. 259 - 261) and formal social constraints (pp. 261 - 265). Together, these strategies help reinforce social cohesion and create the social contexts in which copresence can be experienced.

Theatre and film studies approaches to framing use diverse methodologies. Semiological models of theatrical meaning-making (e.g. Esslin, 1991; Rozik, 2008) are based on observational and historical data. In his breakdown of theatrical sign systems, Esslin uses his observations of stage theatre to identify architecture, ambiance, descriptions, publicity and prologues as framing elements which affect theatrical reception while not being part of the performance proper (1991). Phenomenological analyses of theatrical spectatorship have also shown the importance of physical and social context for theatrical experience (Sauter, 2000). From an archeological perspective, Schechner (2003) emphasized the importance of convention and culturally-specific rituals in the maintenance of theatre's core social constructs. Framing is also important in analyses of theatrical reception, both in terms of social context (Blau, 1990; Bennett, 1997) and architectural design (Carlson, 1990). Historical analyses of the emergence of cinema have also focused on audience engagement, with particular attention paid to architecture, social context and advertising (Singer, 2001). Contemporary film reception has also raised reception contexts in ways which echo Esslin's categories. Specific issues include the importance of adaptation and effective film trailers to create expectation (Hedling, 2006), the social contexts created by fan communities (Mathijs & Sexton, 2011) and cinematic architecture (Arnold, 1985). When cinema and theatre are compared, similarities between the specific strategies used are also evident, most obviously in the design of presentation spaces.

Theories of framing and priming in cognitive psychology are further used to explain the mechanisms through which audience experience is shaped. Cognitive approaches framing and priming show that information and contextual elements shape opinion (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006) and affect behavioral patterns (Janiszewski &

Wyer, 2014). Fauconnier & Turner apply the idea of framing to theatrical spectatorship, showing how audience preparation is used to trigger a cognitive strategy known as conceptual blending (2002). Further research showed that audiences engage in cognitive blending as an interpretive strategy across a variety of narrative experiences, using it to identify which elements are salient to the story at hand (McConachie & Hart, 2006). These strategies are very important to character identification, triggering what Smith (1995) refers to as the person schema.

Bringing together the research from these various ways of understanding presence in theatrical mediations, the framing of theatrical mediations is broken down into two categories:

1. Semantic priming (including content priming and thematic priming)
2. Contextual framing (including triggering events and social context)

Elements of each of these categories are clearly visible in all forms of theatrical mediation, facilitating cross-media analysis. The importance of copresence effects to theatrical mediations strongly suggests that the strategies used in each of these categories effectively prepare audiences for a heightened experience of copresence. The clearest evidence can be found in established forms of theatrical mediation such as theatre and film, as clear social conventions have been established. The lessons learned from these historical examples lend insight into strategies which might be used to create strong copresence effects in virtual theatre and other emerging forms of theatrical mediation. The analytical framework elaborated in this section will also inform the theories of framing and copresence effects which are the ultimate goal of the thesis, providing the backbone for an interdisciplinary approach to understanding copresence effects.

4.2 Chapter 6: Case Studies in Theatrical Framing

While a lot has been written about advertising and framing techniques in film, there is a remarkable lack of literature on framing techniques for stage theatre. The reasons for this gap in the literature are unclear, but they may have to do with the

smaller budgets of theatre companies making business-oriented research unfeasible or with a general focus in theatre studies with the product that appears on stage rather than the contexts in which they are seen. In order to use framing techniques from stage theatre in the experimental design, a more concrete understanding of stage theatre techniques is needed. While a more wide-ranging exploration of framing techniques may be desirable for advancing research into stage theatre, because of the limited uses of this information in the thesis, a smaller scope was selected for Chapter 6. Both interviews and the analysis of archival documentation were used as part of these case studies, which examine stage theatre framing in light of the model of framing created in Chapter 5.

Three companies which all produce live artistic presentations in Vancouver were the subject of these case studies. Touchstone Theatre is a small theatre company specializing in the presentation of new Canadian plays, and was selected because its production model and promotional materials are similar to other small theatre companies. The PuSh Festival of Performing Arts is a larger company whose artistic activities are focused on the presentation of a performance art festival presented annually in Vancouver. The PuSh Festival was selected because its relatively larger promotional and production budget allow for the development of a greater range of materials, and also because some of its festival venues make use of unusual relationships between audiences and performers. Music on Main, while not a theatre company, has a reputation in the local arts scene as a company that pays particularly close attention to audience experience. While their practices are somewhat tangential to stage theatre, I felt that the uniqueness of their approach would serve as an effective counterpoint to the data gathered from Touchstone and PuSh.

Two types of data were gathered for these case studies. First, I interviewed the staff member at each company responsible for audience preparation and audience strategy. The interviews were designed to leverage the expertise of the interview subjects using a semi-structured interview strategy that allowed us to explore the aspect of audience preparation that seemed most relevant to them. Second, I acquired detailed archival material of promotional materials from one production for each company. These were compared and analysed to help determine promotional and informational patterns

as well as to corroborate the strategies outlined in the interviews. The triangulation that using multiple data sources affords (Yin, 2009) makes the findings of this chapter more coherent.

The interview subjects for these case studies were all experts responsible for audience preparation strategies on a professional basis. Because of this, I used a semi-structured interview style that allowed the interview subjects to speak to their expertise while maintaining a focus on audience preparation techniques. The questions were derived from the theoretical model of framing, and focused on the means through which information and context were controlled by the theatre companies. Follow-up questions attempted to focus on the strategic decisions and goals that were the guided the company's framing and priming activities.

Interview data was coded to identify (1) practical measures taken by companies and (2) the goals of the company's strategic decisions. These were then compared to the model of framing techniques established in Chapter 5. An axial coding strategy helped establish relationships between the different elements of framing strategy. Archival materials were received from all three companies, and these were added to the analysis of the interview data to provide concrete examples of framing and priming activities.

The interview data is compared with studies of international approaches to audience framing that focus on industrial approaches to theatrical mediation. Research into framing strategies used in the promotion and presentation of commercial cinema (e.g. Gray, 2010; Mathijs & Sexton, 2011) provides essential context. Additional insights can be gleaned from theme park framing strategies (Jenkins, 2004) and some of the promotional approaches used for narrative video games. The cumulative experiential information of this cross-media analysis enhances the validity and generalizability of the overall results.

The case studies presented in Chapter 6 provide concrete data to support more casual observations about the framing techniques used in connection to stage theatre performances. The revealed patterns of framing strategies reflect social expectations and conventions, allowing for a more formal reflection on the importance of artistic

values in the event itself. While additional cases would be necessary to create a full picture of theatrical framing techniques, these studies are sufficient to help define the “artistic” framing condition used in the framing experiment described in chapters 7 & 8, and provide a compelling window into the strategic decision making behind these framing decisions.

4.3 Chapters 7 & 8: Virtual Theatre Framing Experiment

The final phase of the thesis project is an exploratory mixed-methods experiment that makes use of methodologies developed for the study of mediated copresence. In this experiment, I tested the effects of framing on copresence effects experienced during a virtual theatre performance presented in Second Life, titled *The Forgotten Sentry*. Participants were randomly divided into one of three framing conditions and participated in a performance specifically commissioned for this experiment. Following the performance, participants completed a questionnaire focused on their experience of copresence. A small number of participants were randomly selected to be interviewed in the week following the event in order to contextualize and broaden answers. The interview framework aims to clarify participants’ questionnaire responses rather than introducing new concepts.

The exploratory nature of this experiment made adopting a mixed-methods approach important. As Cresswell notes, using a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches to data gathering in an exploratory study allows for a broader range of future hypotheses to be derived from the results (2009).

The experiment’s single independent variable, framing, was separated onto three conditions. These conditions were referred to as the “Art,” “Entertainment” and “Experimental” conditions. The “Art” condition was based on the case studies of the stage theatre companies analysed in Chapter 6, with linguistic and web design strategies drawn from these theatrical examples. The “Entertainment” condition was based on framing strategies used by the film industry, as reflected in the literature on this topic. Finally, the “Experimental” condition was based on the ways in which experiments in mediated copresence are presented, which make minimal use of priming and frame

the event as research. Each of these conditions differed in their use of e-mail communication, website design and virtual waiting areas depending on the framing condition.

Copresence was measured by adapting the copresence questionnaire used by Nowak & Biocca (2003), with only slight modifications in phrasing to adjust for context. The Nowak & Biocca (2003) questionnaire was selected because it was one of the few established questionnaires addressing copresence (Van Baren & IJsselsteijn, 2004), and already contained narrative elements in the way its questions were framed.

This experiment tested a number of hypotheses relating to the relationship between framing and copresence.

1. Participants in the Art Condition and the Entertainment Condition will have a greater feeling of self-presence, others' copresence and immersion than participants in the Experiment Condition.
2. Participants who use virtual worlds such as Second Life more often will have higher scores on the Others' Copresence and Telepresence Scales.
3. Participants who play multiplayer computer games more often will have higher scores for Others' Copresence and Telepresence

A variety of strategies have been used to ensure the validity of this experimental design:

1. Experimental variables were drawn directly from the conclusions of research presented in chapters 5 & 6 and correspond to both literature-based models of audience preparation and real-world observations of framing strategies. This significantly increases the face value of the experimental procedure (Van Baren & IJsselsteijn, 2004).
2. A pre-existing, validated questionnaire was used to measure participants' experience of copresence. The Likert questionnaire developed by Nowak & Biocca (2003) will be used for this experiment. The full list of questions can be found in Chapter 7.

3. Participants were recruited online and divided randomly into one of the three framing conditions.
4. In order to account for some of the variability inherent in the liveness of the performance, the three conditions were run simultaneously. Participants in all three framing conditions saw the same performance at the same time.
5. Using interviews alongside the original questionnaires allowed us to add depth to the data and shape our interpretation.

This experimental research allows this work to directly address some of the assumptions inherent in previous research into mediated copresence. The strength of the effects of framing on copresence effects can be directly compared to other experiments directed at social presence or copresence.

A small number of post-questionnaire interviews were conducted to provide additional context. Interviews focused on discovering the reasons behind questionnaire answers and gaining a better understanding of the audience experience. The interview results provided significant additional insights into audience experience, revealing elements of framing that had not emerged from the previous research phases. This allows us to broaden the exploratory scope of this experiment by leveraging the subjective differences in audience experience between participants.

Using this mixed methods approach to the experimental results increases the validity of both the survey and interview data. This, in turn, allows for a much wider range of conclusions to be drawn from the experimental results. Specifically, observations about audience behaviour and experience can be generalized for other online artwork and, potentially, for other forms of performative art as well.

Chapter 5. Framing Theatrical Mediations

This chapter presents a coherent framework for analysing presence that is the basis of the research into audience preparation presented in this thesis. Framing is understood in this chapter to include all forms of audience preparation, whether intentionally designed or not, as defined by Goffman in *Frame Analysis* (1974). The audience preparation strategies examined here

include publicity, venue design, interface design and the social conventions of spectatorship. From an analysis of the literature in these areas, I construct a framework for better understanding framing in the context of theatrical mediations.

The rationale for this framework is based on several assumptions presented in the literature review chapters concerning theatrical mediations (Chapter 2) and copresence effects (Chapter 3). First, this research assumes that diverse forms of theatrical mediation are functionally comparable when it comes to audience experience. This is not to say that all forms of theatrical mediation treat audiences identically, but that the differences between theatrical mediations are predictable and understandable based on the media strategies each employs. Second, because of assumptions drawn from the literature on copresence effects presented in Chapter 3, this research assumes that the act of spectatorship and the connections between audience and character are analogous across media.

Chapter Contents

- 5.1 Framing Public Theatrical Mediations
- 5.2 Framing Private Theatrical Mediations
- 5.3 Cognitive Perspectives on Theatrical Framing
- 5.4 Strategizing Framing
 - 5.4.1 Semantic priming
 - 5.4.2 Contextual Framing
- 5.5 Frame Analysis

To deepen our understanding of framing in theatrical mediation, I first examine approaches to framing theatrical mediations. Because there are significant differences between the social contexts of theatrical mediations viewed in public and in private, these have been treated in separate sections. Explorations of framing elements in stage theatre (Esslin, 1991; Rozik, 2008) and film (Gray, 2010) acknowledge that audience preparation has an impact, but offer very little in the way of theoretical explanations for its effectiveness.

Perspectives drawn from cognitive science have also been applied to theatrical mediations and begin to construct a theoretical model of framing. In section 5.3, I examine the ways in which cognitive science has been used to explain theatrical framing. The idea of conceptual blending, coined by Fauconnier & Turner (2002), is particularly useful, having been adapted to both stage theatre (McConachie & Hart, 2006) and film (Oakley, 2013) as a way of explaining the cognitive mode of spectators. Cognitively-focused research into advertising and publicity (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014) also suggests that exposure to information about a product or event decreases the cognitive load for consumers and increases their understanding.

The cognitive science-driven approaches to spectatorship correlate well with the literature regarding theatrical mediations, suggesting a theoretical and strategic model for approaching audience preparation that is presented in section 5.4. First, theatrical mediations engage in semantic priming, presenting information about audience experience to ease the cognitive load of interpretation. Two types of priming are commonly used: content priming (the presentation of specific information from the plot) and thematic priming (the presentation of general information about audience experience). Second, theatrical mediations engage in contextual framing, creating the social conditions which trigger conceptual blending in audiences. Contextual framing is broken down into two categories: physical framing (architectural and visual framing techniques) and temporal framing (elements which signal that the event is about to begin).

This chapter contends that, for theatrical mediations to be effectively framed, both semantic priming and contextual framing must be addressed. The identification of

these categories of framing strategies provides the theoretical basis for subsequent research phases of this thesis, allowing for a more coherent analysis of framing across theatrical mediations.

5.1 Framing Public Theatrical Mediations

Framing plays an important, though often overlooked, role in the analysis of theatrical events. Scholars of stage theatre have explored framing, identifying social and physical constraints that influence audiences' reactions to performances. Film scholars have likewise studied cinematic framing, but these studies are often limited to their impact on purchase decisions or viewing habits (Gray, 2010). The common framing strategies employed in both stage theatre and publically screened film allow us to create an outline of framing in public theatrical mediations. Based on sociological analyses of theatrical framing, we can also begin to identify the role that framing plays for audience experience.

Stage theatre producers make use of diverse approaches to prepare audiences for experiencing the theatrical event. In his analysis of theatrical sign systems, Esslin (1991) identifies a number of elements which work together to frame the theatrical event. These include the event's social context, its physical (architectural) context and other information that is commonly provided before the performance itself, such as its title, genre, and other information provided in publicity materials or posted at the venue itself (Esslin, 1991). Goffman's sociological analysis of theatrical framing identifies conventions such as stage boundaries, the illusion of spontaneity and idiosyncratic speech or visual patterns as elements which create a theatrical context for audiences (1974). Other analyses of stage theatre extend this, focusing on spectators' knowledge of theatrical conventions (Elam, 1980) or the physical and social contexts of the theatrical event (Sauter, 2000).

Similar observations have been made of film screenings as well, possibly because cinematic framing techniques evolved from theatrical models in the early 20th century (Singer, 2001). The 20th century saw big changes in the designs of movie theatres, with a move toward multi-screen theatres in the 1990s (Acland, 2003). These

theatres make use of design strategies from theme parks, using movie-themed design elements and diverse entertainments to define their lobby spaces as a site for movie-related fun (Acland, 2003). Rather than preparing audiences for specific films, these spaces focus on the act of movie-going by saturating the space with references to a wide variety of cinematic paratexts.

Promotional activities for theatrical mediations are diverse, driven by drastically different budgetary constraints and publicity goals (Marich, 2013). For most audience members, the first contact they have with a specific theatrical mediation is with its pre-show publicity. Pre-show publicity provides potential audience members with a range of information about the theatrical event. Contextual information lets audiences know that an event is taking place, but does not necessarily give them any information about the event itself. Contextual information can include details such venues and the dates and times of performance, but also the names of the creative team responsible for the work (e.g. actors, directors, designers, actors). Thematic information gives some additional details about the genre and style of the production, shaping their expectations of the kind of experience. Design elements of posters and websites provide thematic information, as do the tone and pacing of a cinematic trailer (Gray 2010). This kind of information tells audiences the relative amount of thought and seriousness expected of them (Gray, 2010), changing their spectatorial attitude toward the work. Finally, promotional materials can include information about the content of the narrative itself. Frequently, trailers or synopses tell audiences about the characters and the initial incidents of the plot, allowing them to arrive with a basic understanding of the narrative. Information in all three of these categories is present in pre-show materials for all forms of theatrical mediation, although the strategies used differ across media. The information presented to audiences before the production itself plays a central role in shaping their expectations and influences their reaction to the event.

While there is a wide recognition that publicity and other forms of pre-show information are important (e.g. Esslin, 1991; Marich, 2013), the impact of pre-show publicity on audiences beyond attendance figures is not well studied (Gray, 2010). Studies which have approached publicity in theatrical mediations usually limit their observations to purchasing decisions on the part of audience members and have very

little interest in their experience once the event begins (Gray, 2010). Recent research has begun making a connection between publicity and audience experience in film (Gray, 2010), but significant research is needed to extend analysis in this area, in particular for theatrical mediations other than filmed narrative.

The architectural contexts of theatrical mediations have received comparatively more attention in relationship to audience reception. The lobby spaces of stage theatre and cinematic architectures provide important context which allow audiences to shift their perceptual frameworks to become more receptive to the narrative elements of the event (Rozik, 2008, Goffman, 1974). Certain elements of the pre-show experience are similar across public showings of theatrical mediations: access to the lobby is limited to ticket holders and the presentation area includes uniform audience seating that is separated from the stage or screen. In stage theatre audience reception studies, these elements of spatial design are referred to as extra-theatrical features as they are not directly a part of the events that unfold on stage. Extra-theatrical design elements are essential parts of the social experience of spectatorship, and play an important part in our rituals of spectatorship (Schechner, 2003). By indicating that witnesses are about to experience a narrative event (whether on stage or screen), extra-theatrical spatial design shifts the way that audiences perceive the narrative.

Public theatrical mediations present information about performances in the venues themselves. The lobbies of stage theatres tend to provide information about the specific performance and the artists, providing information that serves as a semantic priming device. The information in cinematic venues, on the other hand, emphasizes promotional materials for current and upcoming films, giving contextual cues about film in general rather than thematic or content information about the specific narrative event. Other contexts for both stage theatre and film screenings do result in different approaches to framing.

Framing strategies are most often determined by the cultural contexts of staged and filmed narrative: staged theater is usually presented as art while cinema is usually considered a form of entertainment. The importance of the artistic social context is reinforced by the screening of films in artistic contexts such as gallery spaces, where

more content-driven support material is provided. Likewise, touring Broadway musicals often prepare audiences in similar ways to the cinematic spaces described above. Despite these cases, I think that identifying strategies most common with mainstream stage theatre performances as compared to mainstream film screenings will give us the most useful findings when it comes to creating new applications of framing strategies for virtual theatre productions. Identifying specific strategies used in stage theatre is the primary goal of the case studies presented in Chapter 6.

Theatrical presentation spaces are important framing elements, often creating literal frames around the event itself. These presentation spaces are normally divided into the “house” and the “stage,” separating the different types of social actors (Schechner, 2003; Goffman, 1974). While theatrical architecture can be diverse, the dominant form of theatrical architecture, the proscenium theatre, physically and psychologically separates audiences from the action (Schechner, 2003). Even in black box theatre spaces with flexible seating, a separation is created between audience spaces and performance spaces. The separation from the action is most clearly illustrated by the design of the seating in the house, where large numbers of identical seats all face the area where the performance is to take place. The same design strategies are used for cinematic exhibition spaces, possibly due to early cinematic presentations in stage theatres (Singer, 2001). In movie theatres, the screen occupies the same position as the proscenium arch would in a stage theatre. In both stage theatre and cinema, the house is darkened throughout the performance, while the performance area remains bright, further guiding spectators’ attention toward the action. By emphasizing the narrative space in this way, the perceived importance of the theatrical narrative is reinforced for the audience (Esslin, 1991).

The impact of theatrical framing is also discussed in both theatre and film, although the conclusions are often vague. Esslin (1991) posits that these framing elements provide cues that spectators use as a key to decode the signs of the performance itself. In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman (1974) illustrates how theatrical framing triggers role differentiation, positioning spectators as onlookers rather than active participants in the event. The importance of theatrical framing for role identification is echoed by Rozik (2008), who emphasizes the ways in which theatrical framing signifies

to people that they are to adopt the social role of “spectator” for the duration of the performance. Framing also allows spectators to correctly categorize whether elements of their experience are integrated with or extraneous to the theatrical narrative, in turn allowing them to focus their energy on interpreting and understanding the salient elements of the theatrical event (Rozik, 2008).

The elements used to frame publically presented theatrical mediations are relatively stable, suggesting that they have been found to be effective at preparing audiences to experience theatrical mediations. While there has been relatively little research into its impact on spectatorial experience (Gray, 2010), it is reasonable to presume that these framing strategies are effective due to their longevity. The reasons behind the effectiveness of these framing strategies are unclear, making additional research essential.

5.2 Framing Private Theatrical Mediations

Theatrical mediations such as virtual theatre or narrative video games, as well as streamed or broadcast filmed narrative or animation, are intended to be experienced in a private rather than public setting. The advertising and content priming strategies used to promote theatrical mediations shown in public venues are kept in other forms of theatrical mediation. However, the lack of consistent behavior settings in private venues relaxes the social constraints of spectatorship present in public venues. Because filmed narrative can be shown in both the public venues and private venues, analysis of framing techniques used in television provide insight into the differences between public and private venues. Many framing strategies used in televised distributions of filmed narrative leverage elements of the behavior settings that are found in public theatrical mediations in an attempt to activate the appropriate perceptual scripts. The approaches to creating context for privately viewed theatrical mediations show the importance of the communal aspects of spectatorship, and illustrate the flexibility of the cues that can be used to shape spectatorial experience.

The privacy and diversity of the contexts of viewership make it difficult to access the details of television spectatorship. The information that we have about television

audiences is drawn from ethnographic observation or the analysis of broad statistical data about viewership patterns (Staiger, 2005). These studies of television viewership make a number of fundamental assumptions about audience behavior. The theoretical models underlying the study assume that the social norms of spectatorship create clearly defined dominant and oppositional interpretations (Gorton, 2009), framing audiences as being more active or passive depending on the interests of the theoretical model (Gorton, 2009). Because of the challenges of gathering and interpreting information about spectatorial context, current studies of television audiences tend to focus on larger social patterns of behavior rather than on the contexts of individual spectators.

The wide reach of television and online video distribution allows for the creation of communities of fans outside of the act of spectatorship itself. Traditionally, these communities have been locally based, grounded in “water cooler” discussions of recent episodes. Online communication has expanded this community significantly. Fan groups watch films in very particular ways, creating a communal experience through shared interpretation and creation based on their reactions to a particular show (Staiger, 2005). Online communication has made the creation of community around fan activity much more accessible. Fan-created work inspired by television shows have become an important source of paratextual information for audiences (Gray, 2010). The creation of widespread communities of audience members allows for a sense of communal spectatorship even when the act of spectatorship itself is isolated (Pullen 2006). This re-frames the act of watching a television show as a social experience, allowing viewers easier access to perceptual schemas which reinforce social cohesion and belonging. Since these schemas have been implicated in the creation of copresence effects, this suggests a significant relationship between social contexts and the creation of copresence effects in theatrical mediations.

The desire to create a communal audience has encouraged television production and editing strategies which emphasise liveness and shared experience. Many television shows make use of audience reaction to frame the show as live or as-live. For instance, talk shows and sporting events show camera shots of the audience before and after segments in order to emphasise the presence of a live audience (Marriott, 2007).

Narrative television can also be filmed in front of an audience and the audience reactions integrated into the show's soundtrack (Marriott, 2007). The primary goal of these strategies is to reinforce social conventions and create the audience contagion effects that would otherwise be missing in private venues (Plantinga, 2013). These presentation strategies also reinforce the importance placed on liveness in radio and television, enhancing the social capital of a particular event or show (Crisell, 2012). The use of recorded audiences reinforces the importance of communal experience to spectatorship in theatrical mediations.

Many forms of theatrical mediation shown in private venues also make use of menus and other interactive elements to frame theatrical mediations. The function of these introductory menus is very similar to the cues provided by the architectural design in stage theatre and cinema. Specifically, the introductory menus in video games and DVDs provide thematic and content information about the theatrical mediation to follow and allow a separation between the real world and the narrative experience. Frequently, these menus use fonts, animation and music which provide cues about the genre, tone and narrative content of the narrative. The introductory menu for a computer game has been identified by designers as the entry point to the game experience, emphasizing the importance of using narrative and immersive elements in the menu design itself (Ignatio, 2013). DVD packaging and menus serve a similar purpose, creating a sense of narrative significance that prepares audiences to experience the film in a particular way (Gray, 2010). These framing strategies serve the same anticipatory and informational functions of theatrical lobbies, a parallel which is reinforced by the spatial and movement-oriented nature of many menu animations. By using narrative elements which prompt audience action, a sense of importance and anticipation can be attached to the event, an important aspect of audience preparation for the theatrical narrative.

Framing strategies are important elements of theatrical mediations shown in private venues. The use of lobbies and extra-theatrical designs to create anticipation is replicated in the title sequences and menu designs of privately viewed theatrical mediations. The informational side of framing is accomplished using websites and menu designs. Even the sense of communal spectatorship (often seen as one of the weaknesses of this screening process) can be reinforced by showing or implying the

presence of audiences experiencing an event together. An increased importance is also placed on online communities which revolve around discussions and fan creations based on particular narratives. Direct research in this area remains sparse, highlighting the importance of doing additional research into the effects of contextual elements for understanding these forms of theatrical mediation.

A comparative chart of the techniques available for private and public theatrical mediations shows the ways in which strategies employed by each differ. The starting point of this chart is Esslin's list of "framing and preparatory indicators" in stage theatre (1991, p. 52-55). This list of techniques is not meant to be exhaustive and the categories are more flexible than the chart makes them appear (as discussed in the two preceding sections).

Public Theatrical Mediations	Private Theatrical Mediations
Advertising & Publicity	Advertising & Publicity
Critical Reviews	Critical Reviews
Physical proximity with other audience members creates a live, communal experience	Editing techniques create a sense of live, communal experience
Online communities & fan culture create communities	Online communities & fan culture create communities
Entrances and lobbies create liminal spaces	Packaging, menus and playback control create liminal experiences

Public Theatrical Mediations	Private Theatrical Mediations
Opening and closing sequences indicate the beginning and end of the performance	Opening and closing sequences indicate the beginning, end and interruptions in the performance.
Large stage or screen contains the performance.	Huge variability in screen size and placement
Strict behavioral conventions for audiences	Audience agency in behaviours

5.3 Cognitive Perspectives on Theatrical Framing

Cognitive theories of spectatorship derived from psychological and neurological studies of behaviour and perception help explain the effectiveness of theatrical framing strategies. The cognitive theories used here are drawn from two major areas: (1) research into the ways in which framing shapes perception and (2) studies of intersubjectivity and the perception of emotional cues. Research in these areas has not been applied to copresence, but I will show here how these theories can be extended to help create a coherent theory of framing theatrical copresence.

A number of concepts within cognitive psychology help with theorizing the role of framing in theatrical mediations. *Cognitive load* is frequently used to explore and explain the ways in which people reduce the cognitive effort of interpreting and reacting to the world around them. The concepts of schemas and behavioural scripts represent two of the ways that cognitive load can be mitigated. *Schemas* represent established patterns of thought and assumptions that are used as mental shortcuts to reduce the effort needed to understand certain issues or situations. *Behavioral scripts* are a subset of schema associated with behavioural patterns, allowing people to act appropriately in social situations without needing a detailed analysis of the specific context. Scripts and schemas are triggered when an individual knows enough about a situation that they can

categorize it with other experiences, allowing them to make assumptions about how the situation will unfold. By processing the world using scripts and schemas, people effectively reduce the amount of cognitive energy needed to understand the world around them, making these strategies important in the context of human cognition.

The related concepts of *framing* and *priming* refer to contextual cues which shape interpretation. In cognitive terms, framing and priming help facilitate interpretation by triggering and (over repeated exposures) creating particular schemas and scripts. Framing usually refers to the pattern of contextual elements which shape thoughts and behaviours. Frames help provide a lens through which perceptions are filtered and interpreted. Priming refers to a specific cognitive process through which one experience or stimulus affects our subsequent perceptions of similar stimuli, making it easier to process information about things that were experienced recently. Repetition greatly increases the impact of priming, and these repeated priming effects have been used to explain the influence of media on public opinion (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006) or examine the direct impact of marketing on purchasing patterns (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014). Framing and priming give us cues about the relative importance of perceptual information, triggering scripts and schemas to facilitate interpretation and interaction. As such, they are powerful tools for shaping our reactions to theatrical mediations and reinforcing the creation of copresence effects.

The cognitive concept of priming is used extensively to study consumer behaviour and this research provides a conceptual starting point for understanding the mechanisms which come into play when preparing audiences for theatrical mediations. Studies show that priming influences understanding, goals, behaviours and affective responses that people have to products thereby changing consumption patterns (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014). Models of priming derived from the business research suggest that semantic concepts can serve as effective triggers for specific cognitive modes (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014). Janiszewski and Wyer point out that these mechanisms rely on consumers already having learned particular patterns of behaviour or analytical thinking, making repetition and exposure very important in a marketing context (2014). Priming makes making specific ideas, concepts, or thinking patterns more accessible and therefore more likely to manifest in behaviour.

A small number of studies have applied this cognitive approach to priming to a mediated communications context. These studies suggest a connection between telepresence and priming, although the mechanisms of the impact is unclear as of yet. Nunez & Blake studied whether information about the setting of a virtual environment would affect users' sense of immersion in the environment (2003). They found a positive correlation for high quality virtual environments, but a negative correlation for low quality virtual environments, suggesting that priming has an indirect and complex relationship to immersion (Nunez & Blake, 2003). A subsequent experiment found that a hip-hop introduction had a positive impact on user experience, but only for users who had a pre-existing preference for hip-hop music (Ladeira, Nunez & Blake, 2005). Jones tested the impact of reading Superman comic books on reactions to Superman movies, finding that reading a comic that shared characters and themes (but not plot) did have a positive impact on audience reports of presence (2008). In all three of these experiments, priming had a significant but unpredictable influence on user experiences of narrative, suggesting that a user's individual position and previous knowledge have a large role to play in our experience of mediated narrative.

The use of priming as a user preparation technique plays a significant role in the presentation of narrative in virtual environments. Pinchbeck and Stevens note that presence, narrative and characterisation are interrelated in virtual environments, suggesting that narrative is an essential element of the creation of online presence (2005). Schroeder similarly implicates experiential context as an important part of mediated experiences (2006). Taken together with the cognitive research, there is a strong suggestion that priming and other forms of contextualization play a strong role in creating user experiences in virtually mediated narrative. The importance of contextualization to audience engagement holds in theatrical mediations as well, further reinforcing priming as an important mechanism for theatrical spectatorship.

Theatre has been associated with psychological studies of framing and priming since Goffman used it as an example of how framing worked in *Frame Analysis* (1974). Goffman contends that framing strategies surrounding theatrical events prepare audiences to see them in specific and unusual ways (1974). Fauconnier and Turner extend Goffman's analysis, showing how theatrical approaches to framing serve to cue

audiences to analyse their perception using a cognitive strategy known as conceptual blending (2002). Conceptual blending is the process by which people combine information from various perceptual domains in order to create a coherent mental model of an event or place (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002). Once spectators have accepted the frame and basic premise of the performance, this blending happens without conscious effort, allowing this model of spectatorship to apply to situations where audiences are more active in the creation of the narrative (McConachie & Hart, 2006). Framing and priming strategies used to present theatrical mediations provide the contextual cues needed for audiences to enter this particular mode of perceptual processing.

Several categories of contextual cues help provide the impetus to use conceptual blending and accept that the characters on screen should be interpreted as agents in their own right. The importance of characters being interpreted as people has been referred to as the “person schema,” a set of criteria that are used by audiences to determine how they react to on-screen characters (Smith, 1995). Several contextual factors, including genre (Carroll, 1999), film titles (Oatley, 2013) and prior emotional state (Plantinga, 2009) all have significant impact on audiences’ interpretations of the emotional state of on-screen characters. The ways in which films are able to “prefocus” (Carroll, 1999, p. 47) our attentions on particular aspects of the presentation help shape our reactions to the emotional content of the film. Since our interpretations of characters’ emotions is a key element of whether we treat them as people (Smith, 1995), the ways in which audiences are prepared should have a significant impact on the creation of copresence effects as well.

The strength of the connection between spectators and characters defines our feelings of co-presence and the ways in which we experience empathy. As Smith (1995) and Plantinga (2009) both point out, it is very difficult to experience an emotional connection if it has not been established the other figure is sufficiently human to have emotions themselves. Biocca, Harms & Burgoon (2003) also indicate that emotional accessibility is both a prerequisite and one of the primary benefits of our experiences of social presence. Plantinga defines empathy as a capacity to respond to another person’s emotional situation (2009), a capacity which involves both a receptive and interpretive element (Tan, 2013). In all of these cases, empathy is a strong indicator that an

individual feels themselves to be in the presence of another person. The conceptual blending that allows them to simultaneously accept fictional characters as fulfilling the person schema also allows them to feel empathy with characters they consciously know to be false. Accepting to treat such fictional characters as sufficiently real to trigger automatic emotional responses provides a strong indication that an effective copresence effect has been created.

Cognitive approaches to interpersonal relationships also studies the mechanisms by which people perceive others' actions and emotions. As Tan points out, people perceive and interpret others' emotions and intentions every day, and these skills are central to spectatorship (2013). The neurological basis for understanding others' actions is called the perception-action mechanism, an automatic mechanism based primarily on the mirror neuron system (Tan, 2013). In this model, the actors' emotional cues are perceived directly and then integrated into the contextual logic framework provided by the narrative (Oates, 2013). The narrative provides a causal explanation of the characters' emotional state, reinforcing their status as a person (and thus their perceived copresence) within the narrative context. This added context encourages spectators to go beyond simply mimicking the characters' emotions to having their own emotional responses.

Strategies within theatrical mediations themselves help reinforce spectators' empathic responses to the characters. For instance, the amplification of emotional cues in both staged theatre (Esslin, 1991) and film (Smith, 1995; Tan, 2013) serve to facilitate spectators' interpretations of emotional cues. Music is often used as a tool to prefocus responses, providing cues to the audience about the kinds of emotional responses required of them (Plantinga, 2009). These internal cues provide much of the context that audience members need to become emotionally engaged with the characters. This engagement, in turn, provides the important building blocks for the creation of copresence effects.

Content priming also provides an important framing element for the creation of an empathic connection within theatrical mediation. By introducing narrative elements such as characters, genres and images from the event, the amount of cognitive effort required

to interpret events is decreased. This allows audiences to spend more attention and energy on the details of the story and their connection with the characters. The ability of content priming to establish expectations is also important, as it gives audiences a framework for understanding the narrative.

While the tools found within the theatrical mediation form the centerpiece of cognitive approaches to spectatorship, the theories outlined above provide a solid underpinning for a cognitive focus on framing techniques. The ability to detect and react to emotions in theatrical mediations does not exist in a vacuum. Both Fauconnier & Turner's conceptual blending (2002) and Smith's person schema (1995) provide indications of how important context is. For audiences, being prepared to interpret characters' actions within a specific narrative framework is the first step to adopting a cognitive model conducive to understanding character interaction and the subtleties of the narrative being presented. Conceptual blending allows for this depth of understanding and minimizes the cognitive dissonance of needing to interpret the theatrical and extratheatrical worlds simultaneously. By carefully managing audience experience before the event, creators can take significant step toward facilitating the creation of copresence effects by establishing favourable conditions for spectators to adopt a cognitive model based on conceptual blending.

5.4 Strategizing Framing

Using approaches and terminology drawn from cognitive studies of spectatorship, we can break down theatrical framing strategies according to their functions. This functional analysis of framing strategies focuses the discussion of framing strategies around practical considerations, while maintaining a rigorous analytical framework. In this section, I present theatrical framing strategies using two lenses drawn from cognitive studies: semantic priming and contextual framing.

This analysis of framing strategies allows for the establishment of two broad categories. First, framing techniques serve as a form of semantic priming, presenting audiences with information about the performance that helps shape their responses to the narrative information that they are presented with. These techniques take advantage

of cognitive priming strategies, using the presentation of information to decrease the cognitive load required to understand and interpret the narrative. Second, framing techniques act as behavioural cues, indicating to audiences that a significant theatrical narrative is about to begin. Cognitively, these cues trigger behavioural scripts and interpretive schemas which change audience perceptions of the performance. Together, the use of priming and behavioural cues create the conditions for spectatorship in theatrical mediations.

5.4.1 Semantic priming

The first functional category of theatrical framing strategies concerns the information about the narrative that is presented to audiences prior to their experiencing the theatrical event. Advertising, publicity and critical reviews all provide narrative information to audiences. This information can relate to the content of the narrative, or to thematic elements related more to audience experience.

Cognitively, this information serves to prime audience members, preparing them for the event and reducing the amount of cognitive effort required to interpret narrative events. In many cases, priming for theatrical mediations is simple semantic priming; people find it easier to interpret information if they have recently been introduced to similar concepts or images. Cognitive research into consumer behaviour has shown that semantic priming can have behavioural and affective influences (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014), and these effects carry over into theatrical framing strategies as well. A framing strategy that makes effective use of semantic priming strategies can positively impact audience experience.

Priming begins long before the event itself and relies on repetition to maintain audience interest and awareness (Marich, 2013). The accessibility of information about the event serves to prepare the audience and shape their expectations of the theatrical mediation. As suggested by the cognitive research (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014), this information serves to decrease cognitive load as well as influencing the behavioural and affective cues that audiences use to understand the event. Semantic priming serves to make the theatrical mediation more accessible.

Pre-show publicity is the most common way that content priming is delivered. Publicity can take many forms, from poster and handbills to filmed trailers or even interactive computer programs. Generally, the medium used to provide content priming is determined by the budget, distribution and production capacity of the company creating the work. Films and video games, which have larger budgets and larger potential audiences, will tend to use more expensive and accessible forms of content priming, while the smaller scope of most stage theatre performances leads to more limited forms of publicity.

For the purposes of deconstructing priming strategies used in theatrical mediations, I distinguish between two types of semantic priming: thematic priming and content priming. Thematic priming refers to information about the production that does not directly introduce narrative information. Thematic priming can include information about the creators of the production as well as genre and theme – elements which allow audiences to put the work in a broader creative context. Content priming refers to information about the narrative being presented, including information about characters, setting and plot. Because they are more general, I will be covering thematic priming elements first.

Information about the creative team behind specific theatrical mediations is an important element of thematic priming. For those who know the work of the creators, this information affords insight into the aesthetic experience they will expect, priming knowledge and modes of thought appropriate to the event. Most theatrical mediations provide their audiences with this kind of information, although the details differ from one medium to the next. Stage theatre companies highlight the name of the company (each with its specific mandate), the director and the author in their promotional materials. Occasionally, a stage theatre production with a well-known actor will provide that information as well. Puppet theatre performances focus on the virtuosic work of the puppeteer. Filmed narrative emphasises actors and directors (and occasionally producers). Except in the rare cases where a project has a famous producer or lead designer, narrative video games rarely prime audiences with the names of the creators, relying instead on the reputation of the studio or existing IP to shape player expectations. Priming audiences with the names of creators allows audiences to better

contextualize their experience, and is an important tool for creators and promoters of theatrical mediations.

Giving audiences information about a production's genre is the most commonly used form of thematic priming. An understanding of genre provides audiences with an important interpretive framework that is used to understand the significance of locations, characters, objects and actions within the narrative. For instance, an unexpected knock at the door late at night has very different connotations in a horror story than in a farce or romance. Gray illustrates the impact that genre identification can have on audience reception in his analysis of the trailer for *The Sweet Hereafter*; while the Canadian trailer framed the film as a drama, the American trailer presented it as a thriller, leading to distinctive audience and critical responses in the two countries (2010). A knowledge of genre allows audiences to interpret these narrative signals in ways that are appropriate to the narrative, shaping their experience of the story.

Indications of genre in promotional material are made using conventional aesthetic choices through visual cues (such as colour and font choice), textual cues (such as titles and taglines) and auditory cues (such as music and narration). Studies of film posters have indicated that films with similar genres use very similar approaches to visual design, giving audiences familiar with the conventions significant information about the intended experience and interpretation of the film (Gray, 2010). Not only is genre an important consideration for audiences deciding whether to view a particular event (Marich, 2013), but it also provides an essential semantic framework for shaping audience interpretation.

The priming of narrative themes gives audience more detail about the event, helping them to differentiate between narratives within a single genre and creating a more refined picture of the narrative experience. Symbolic imagery or music is presented as representational of the narrative and the issues that it raises. This kind of thematic priming works on a primarily semantic level, increasing understanding and decreasing the cognitive load of interpretation for audiences. It also fills an important role as a semantic prime for audiences' affective responses, as it provides early interpretive cues that frame the narrative content.

Narrative themes are primed using a number of promotional strategies. Promotional posters normally contain visual references that provide information about thematic elements of the narrative. Trailers make use of imagery, narration, pacing and music as thematic indicators. And the written synopses provided on websites, press releases or programs often focus on thematic elements. In many cases, promotional materials tell audiences explicitly what they will feel when they experience the production. This information subsequently has a significant impact on audience interpretation and response to the theatrical mediation they experience (Gray, 2010).

Semantic priming focusing on thematic elements fulfills two important cognitive functions. First, it activates semantic and evaluative concepts (as defined in Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014) by making contextual information about the production more accessible. The knowledge provided about the production's creators, genre and themes allow audience members to interpret the theatrical narrative more easily. Second, it shapes audience experience by predisposing audiences to specific affective states. The information presented to audiences regarding genre and theme primes audiences to experience the narrative using a specific set of affective models and encourages a stronger affective and empathetic response to the narrative. While thematic priming does not provide direct information about narrative content, it is very effective at preparing audiences for the experience of theatrical narrative.

Content priming strategies present narrative information to audiences in order to prepare them for the performance. Stage theatre productions use written plot synopses on websites and in programs to present this information. Filmed narratives primarily use trailers to convey content information, although written material is also present in that industry. Stage theatre and film have different approaches to presenting narrative content which I explore in more detail in Chapter 6. Going into a theatrical mediation, audiences typically know (1) a small number of narrative events of the story and (2) background information about the primary characters. The express goal of providing this information to audiences is to influence purchase or consumption decisions, but content priming also helps ease audience interpretation (Gray, 2010).

Determining the right amount of narrative information to reveal is a challenge for producers of theatrical mediations. Going into most theatrical mediations, audiences already know the following:

1. The names and a general description of the protagonist.
2. The initial narrative situation.
3. The inciting incident of the story.

The amount of detail beyond this point varies widely. Filmed narratives generally release more information than stage theatre (more on this in Chapter 6), providing snapshots of scenes from throughout the film in their trailers. These trailers rapidly arrive at the limit of the amount of content they present, and trailers that reveal too much are criticised by audiences for revealing too much (Gray, 2010).

A small number of theatrical mediations provide much more complete narrative summaries to audiences. This tends to happen in a very small subset of stage theatre, most notably in operatic or Shakespearean productions. The presentation of complete narrative information is also seen in the adaptation of well-known narratives in other theatrical mediations; in these cases, the original story itself is a form of content priming for audiences. Situations where the complete narrative is known change audience experience significantly, emphasising the virtuosic interpretation and aesthetic choices rather than narrative (Howard, 2008). The amount of narrative information presented has the potential to change the interpretive focus of audience members as part of the theatrical experience.

A subset of narrative events, character background is also frequently revealed as part of content priming strategies, especially when the narrative is heavily character-driven. This allows audiences to have knowledge of the protagonist, and to begin identifying with them before the beginning of the event itself. Theatrical mediations that focus on character information as part of content priming are sending the message to those audiences that the characters are the main focus of the plot. This, in turn, encourages them to interpret the narrative in a specific way, focusing on the inner journey of the character.

In each of these cases, the intention of providing narrative information to audiences before the performance is to increase their familiarity with the story and to influence their interpretations of the event (Gray, 2010). This goal is supported by cognitive studies of priming strategies, which show that exposure to related materials or ideas does indeed facilitate understanding and engagement. The range in approaches and strategies for content priming suggest that, while having some content priming is beneficial, the means used to deliver this content can be very diverse indeed. Ensuring that these strategies reach an appropriate audience and stay within the budgetary capacity of the producer seems to be the more important consideration for creators. Content priming is very widespread, however, suggesting that it is indeed a vital aspect of framing theatrical mediations.

5.4.2 Contextual Framing

The second category of audience preparation techniques separates theatrical narratives from everyday experience. Framing strategies include liminal experiences (such as lobbies, menus and opening segments) and social-behavioral framing (such as community formation and behavioral conventions). This wide range of strategies can be shown to influence audience reception by changing the ways in which people think about the theatrical event.

On a cognitive level, these contextual framing strategies are a blend of behavioral and semantic priming, but because the information and behavioral cues provided are not related to the narrative, I am referring to them as framing here following the definition established by Goffman (1974). In public theatrical mediations, these strategies are very well defined, but audience behaviours are more difficult to track for theatrical mediations seen in the privacy of the audience members' homes, making contextual work more difficult. Contextual framing serves primarily to trigger to conceptual blending and the other forms of perceptual processing particular to theatrical spectatorship. As such, they are an important element of producing and presenting theatrical mediations.

Conceptual blending, a cognitive processing model whereby audiences combine perceptual information from various sources to create a coherent sense of theatrical

narrative, is essential for theatrical spectatorship (for more detail, see section 5.3). The two external elements that are required for cognitive blending to take place are a trigger to indicate that cognitive blending is an appropriate interpretive strategy and a framing mechanism to indicate the limits of the fictional world (McConachie & Hart, 2006). In formal public theatrical mediations, architectural strategies serve this function; lobbies serve as a liminal space between the real and theatrical worlds, while audience seating and the design and placement of the stage (or screen) provide visual representations of the limits of the fictional space. Even less formal public theatrical mediations such as street theatre carefully construct separations between performance and audience space, helping to trigger cognitive strategies appropriate to spectatorship.

Public theatrical mediations place codified behavioural limitations on audiences. Audiences for stage theatre and public film screenings are expected to be quiet and interact with the event in a limited number of ways (laughing, clapping, etc.). In some forms of live theatre (and a few cult films), audiences are encouraged to be more active, but for the most part, audiences are trained to be as inconspicuous as possible so as not to distract others. These behavioural conventions act as behavioural primes affecting semantic interpretation as well as affective responses. As Rozik (2009) points out and as is borne out in cognitive approaches to spectatorship (McConachie & Hart, 2006), these behavioural conventions serve to let audiences know that they need to assume the role of audience. These behavioural primes impact audience experience by triggering conceptual processing models that prioritize and encourage the appropriate interpretation of narrative elements.

Architectural and social-behavioural framing approaches are not possible for private theatrical mediations, and other strategies are used to trigger the kinds of cognitive approaches required for effective spectatorship. Introductory sequences and menus serve as indicators of the beginning of the narrative event, cueing audiences to shift their perceptual strategies. As Gorton observes, television shows make use of theme songs alongside these introductory sequences to draw audiences into the narrative world (2009). The musical aspect of this strategy may be particularly important as many television viewers will leave the room during commercials and pay attention to auditory cues to signal that it is time to return to the screen. By cueing audience members

of the shift between advertising and narrative content, television shows indicate the moment at which audiences should shift their receptive state. The intro sequences and theme music thus play the same cognitive role as stage theatre's architectural strategies.

The increasing importance of recorded and time shifted video, first with video cassettes and DVDs and now with digital downloads or streaming services, again changes the strategies used to trigger appropriate cognitive strategies. Websites use banners, images and loading pages that are visible before the videos load, while Netflix presents users with a still image drawn from the video or promotional material. DVD intro videos and menus serve a similar function, acting as a gateway to the narrative experience. In each case, the introductory material very quickly gives way to the program – often to an introductory segment integrated into the narrative itself.

Other forms of digital narrative, such as computer games, also make use of menus and introductory cinematics to draw audiences into the experience. These serve not only to provide content cues, but also to provide a connection between gameplay and narrative. Game menu systems frequently provide narrative and gameplay information without being part of the enacted narrative itself (Tavinor, 2009). Menus also contain functional game elements such as saving or control settings, controlling the game while remaining outside of its ludic and narrative content (Tavinor, 2009). Menus remind players that they are playing a game and provide a gateway through which they can access the gameplay, serving many of the same gatekeeping and framing functions as theatrical architecture.

The fact that newer forms of theatrical mediation use much less contextual priming suggests that a shift may be occurring in the ways in which we interact with theatrical mediations. The first potential explanation is simply that these new forms of theatrical mediation are underdeveloped and will emerge over time. This possibility is supported by the evolution of online video streaming platforms over the last several years. In that time, branded streaming sites with banners and other forms of show publicity have grown, perhaps illustrating that these emerging forms of theatrical mediation are developing the same kinds of social and behavioural structures that define

stage theatre and film viewing. It is also possible that audience expectations of the spectatorial experience are changing. With the increased emphasis on viewer choice and flexibility comes an expectation of agency – of active participation in the viewing experience. Framing may be perceived as a barrier to the experience of the content in a social landscape where ease of access is increasingly important (Janovich & Faire, 2003). The future evolution of framing strategies for theatrical mediation will depend on which of these possibilities is currently unfolding in our cultural landscape.

5.5 Frame Analysis

Examples of framing in theatrical mediations suggest that two types of framing are used, each with a distinct purpose. Semantic priming makes it easier for audiences to interpret and understand what they see in the theatrical event, taking advantage of cognitive strategies such as the availability heuristic to reduce the amount of cognitive load experienced by audiences. Contextual framing, on the other hand, helps indicate to audiences that specific perceptual strategies such as cognitive blending are required to get the most out of their experience. Each of these approaches contributes to the perceived social value of experiencing a particular mediation. Framing strategies for theatrical mediations can be understood using this analytical construct.

Framing Strategy	Practical Examples	Cognitive Impact
Semantic Priming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content priming 	Plot information (characters, plot events, etc.) presented in advertising, publicity and show programs.	Reduces interpretive cognitive load Shapes expectations
Semantic Priming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic priming 	Contextual information (themes, genre, creators' names, etc.) presented in advertising, publicity and show programs	Reduces interpretive cognitive load Shapes expectations

Framing Strategy	Practical Examples	Cognitive Impact
Contextual Framing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liminal cues 	Signs which indicate to audiences where the real world ends and the performance begins (lobbies, stages, frames, opening credits, menus, etc.)	Triggers cognitive modes associated with spectatorship (e.g. conceptual blending)
Contextual Framing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social context 	Elements which increase the social importance of the event (community formation, behavioral conventions, etc.)	Increases perceived salience of narrative information

Taken together, these framing strategies shape audience reaction to theatrical mediations by shaping their cognitive and perceptual approaches to spectatorship. While the focus of most of the research into framing techniques focuses on advertising and the ability of framing to attract audiences to see a particular production, these other impacts on audience experience should not be underestimated. For practitioners in both established and emerging forms of theatrical mediation, the establishment of effective conditions for spectatorship needs to be front of mind. Based on the research, three social-cognitive elements are addressed by framing: reducing cognitive load, triggering specific perceptual-interpretive strategies and increasing informational salience. An analysis of these cognitive elements and their relationship to current framing strategies in stage theatre and live musical performance will form the backbone of the analysis in the following chapter.

By looking at approaches to framing through this particular analytical lens, we can begin to identify effective strategies for preparing audiences for the experience of theatrical mediation. In doing so, we position ourselves to better understand the theoretical and strategic considerations needed to effectively frame established and emerging forms of theatrical mediation. The functional breakdown of framing presenting

in this chapter lays the groundwork for my analysis of audience preparation through case studies and experimental approaches in the following chapters.

Chapter 6. Case Studies in Theatrical Framing

This chapter reports on case studies of the audience preparation strategies of three Vancouver-based live art companies. The goal of this chapter is to document and analyse framing practices in stage theatre in order to broaden our understanding of audience preparation strategies. The data presented in this chapter fills a significant gap in the literature about framing artistic approaches to theatrical mediation. This chapter examines real-world approaches to audience preparation in a number of artistic performative contexts and compare these to the strategies employed for other forms of theatrical mediation.

Chapter Contents

- 6.1 Case 1: Touchstone Theatre
 - 6.1.1 Advertising and Publicity
 - 6.1.2 Reviews and Social Media
 - 6.1.3 Location-based framing
- 6.2 Case 2: PuSh International Performing Arts Festival
 - 6.2.1 Advertising and Publicity
 - 6.2.2 Reviews and Social Media
 - 6.2.3 Location-based Priming
- 6.3 Case 3: Music on Main
 - 6.3.1 Advertising and Publicity
 - 6.3.2 Reviews and Social Media
 - 6.3.3 Location-based Priming
- 6.4 Framing Practises in Stage Performance
 - 6.4.1 Semantic Priming
 - 6.4.2 Contextual framing
- 6.5 Researching Theatrical Framing

This chapter analyses three diverse Vancouver-based live event production companies: Touchstone Theatre, The PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (PuSh Festival) and Music on Main. Touchstone Theatre is a local independent theatre company which produces works by Canadian playwrights. The PuSh International Performing Arts Festival presents the works of other artists in a 3-week festival every February, but does not produce its own theatrical performances. Finally, Music on Main is a local presenter of modern classical music with a non-traditional approach to audience relations.

These companies were selected because they were different from each other across a variety of criteria. Diversity in these areas helps to ensure that our data comes from a range of organizations, increasing the generalizability of these observations.

	Touchstone Theatre	PuSh Festival	Music on Main
Type of artistic event	Narrative Theatre	Performance Art	Contemporary Classical Music (including opera)
Artistic Activity	1 major production (9-10 shows over 2 weeks); 1 co-presentation (number of shows varies)	3-week festival with over 100 performances	3-4 concerts monthly; 1-week festival with 7 performances
Production Venues	Traditional stage theatre spaces (1-2 venues annually)	Traditional stage theatres, site specific performance & cabaret space (21 venues)	Informal music venues, including halls & cabarets (2 primary venues, 3-4 others)
Artistic Focus	Develop and present contemporary Canadian plays	Engage and enrich audiences by presenting experimental international performance art	Bring people together through contemporary classical music

Because of differences in scope and focus, these three companies offer an interesting cross-section of live artistic performance in Vancouver. Touchstone is a good representation of small theatre companies in Vancouver, with a limited budget and tightly focused artistic mandate (Dunn interview). Their focus on the development and production of Canadian plays (Touchstone Theatre, 2015) defines their identity in the

local theatre community. The PuSh Festival is a much larger organization and presents international work in the context of a 3-week performance art festival (PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, 2015). Their publicity materials focus on artistic risk taking and aim for a much wider audience than Touchstone Theatre (PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, 2015; Gibbs interview). In addition, the PuSh Festival productions often use non-traditional venues, including site-specific performances and a cabaret space (PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, 2015; Gibbs interview). While Music on Main's focus is on musical rather than theatrical performance, they have a reputation in the local art scene as being very innovative when it comes to audience development and preparation strategies (Lederman, 2014). Theatre professionals often cite Music on Main as an influence on their own audience preparation strategies (e.g. Gibbs interview). These three companies occupy very different places in Vancouver's art scene, and this diversity will help broaden the range of observations these case studies make possible.

While all three companies are located in Vancouver, a selection of companies with diversity in these areas could be used to create a snapshot of audience preparation strategies in other cities as well. By selecting companies which demonstrate diversity in terms of the type of live event they present, company size, venue use and mandate, a representative sample of similar scope and range could be found in other Canadian and international theatre contexts. In this chapter, since the goal is to provide an overview of artistic performance framing practices, we will be relying on this sample designed to highlight diverse approaches to producing and presenting live art. While a more complete picture of worldwide practices in theatrical framing is beyond the scope of this thesis, the methods utilized here provide a coherent framework for future research.

The audience framing approaches of these three companies are analysed using two sources of evidence: expert interviews and archival documents. A series of interviews with the artistic directors and communications managers of the companies were conducted in late 2012. Subjects were interviewed using a focused semi-structured interview format. As suggested by Yin (2009), the questions in these interviews were kept open ended to minimize interviewer bias in the collected data. These interviews focused on the approaches to audience preparation used by the companies, with a specific focus on the identification of their desired audience experience and the

strategies employed to achieve those outcomes. The interviews are supplemented by recent examples of digital and print-based promotional materials (including websites, posters, print advertising, digital advertising and postcards) from all three companies. The diversity of evidence available allows for a detailed analysis of the real-world strategies these companies use to prepare their audiences.

The expert interviews were coded along two axes, reflecting the practical and theoretical elements of framing established the functional framework of framing analysis outlined in Chapter 5. Interview transcripts were evaluated for the ways they revealed strategic decisions in relation to the literature on theatrical framing: (1) advertising and publicity, (2) spatial design, (3) audience conventions, and (4) community/audience development strategies. The transcripts were also coded based on the analytical model of framing established in Chapter 5: semantic priming (thematic priming / content priming) and contextual framing (cognitive triggering strategies / social context). These two axes of coding were then triangulated to create a detailed picture of the strategic and functional decisions made by the companies.

The archival documents provided by the companies helped provide confirmation of some of their framing strategies. All three companies provided digital copies of their promotional materials directly to the researcher. Publicly available online archives (company websites and social media profiles) were also analysed in order to establish the ways in which companies use online resources. Archival documents were analysed using a pattern matching model, attempting to confirm and increase the internal validity of the strategic decisions outlined in the interviews. Promotional materials were also evaluated to determine the extent to which their strategic focus is on thematic or content priming.

Each of the companies' approaches to audience preparation is presented here in three categories: (1) advertising and promotion, (2) reviews and social media, and (2) on-site strategies. A narrative descriptive writing model is used in order to create a compelling image of each company's approach to framing their performances. Particular attention is paid in these descriptions to the ways in which framing strategies differ between the three companies.

Following the description of the stage theatre companies' framing strategies, a cross-case analysis is conducted using the functional analysis of framing strategies established in Chapter 5. First, the data is analysed to attempt to find patterns in semantic priming and the degrees to which thematic and content priming are used in theatrical priming. Second, contextual framing is analysed across the three companies to evaluate the ways in which they build social importance and trigger audience cognitive models at their performances. This analysis reveals both a model of framing that is generally used by the companies, but also identifies a number of more unusual approaches the companies are implementing.

These accounts of audience preparation strategies in live artistic performances will be compared to literature-based studies of film promotional and venue-based strategies. This comparison will form the basis of our experimental approach to exploring audience preparation technique as applied to online theatre events.

6.1 Case 1: Touchstone Theatre

This analysis of Touchstone Theatre's audience preparation strategies is based on an semi-structured interview with artistic director Katrina Dunn on August 1, 2012 as well as the print and digital promotional material created for their 2014 production of *Late Company* by Jordan Tannahill. Touchstone Theatre is a small theatre company, founded in 1977, that specializes in the production and development of plays by Canadian playwrights (all general information about Touchstone theatre comes from: Touchstone Theatre, 2015). Touchstone produces one or two plays each year, and frequently partners with other groups, such as the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, in the presentation of Canadian plays from around the country. Touchstone Theatre also helps playwrights develop new plays for presentation by the company and for future publication. Katrina Dunn has been the Artistic Director of Touchstone Theatre since 1997.

Touchstone Theatre's audience preparation strategies are closely tied to their company mandate:

Touchstone Theatre develops and presents professional theatrical productions. We explore the contemporary Canadian play through content and form. We stimulate public interest in Canadian cultural perspectives. (Touchstone Theatre, 2015)

The company mandate not only affects Touchstone's productions, but is also a defining factor in many of their publicity decisions. As Dunn pointed out in her interview: "everything we do is designed to highlight the playwright and the text." As the analysis of Touchstone's Theatre's framing strategies shows, the company's mandate shapes their strategic approach to framing.

6.1.1 Advertising and Publicity

Touchstone Theatre's advertising and publicity strategy is currently changing. "As newspapers eliminate their theatre coverage, people turn to other sources to find out about shows. As a result, advertising in print publications is less effective" (Dunn interview). The lack of print advertising has yet to be replaced by a solid digital strategy, however. Dunn states that "[Touchstone is] not sure yet how to use online advertising most effectively," and both their physical and digital advertising "[tries] to direct people to our website." As the archival materials provided by Touchstone indicate, the company does still make use of print posters and postcards as promotional strategies.

Touchstone pays significant attention to the aesthetics of its promotional materials. Analysis of their promotional materials for *Late Company* reveals the importance of a cohesive visual branding identity for the show. All online and print materials share colours, fonts and design elements. For each show, Touchstone makes use of the following direct publicity:

1. **Web Page:** Each show has a single web page on Touchstone Theatre's website, with design elements drawn from the overall marketing vision for the show. The web page is the centerpiece of the company's promotion, as all other promotional material aims to direct spectators to the company's website. The show's web page contains a short description of the play and information about ticketing. Because Touchstone Theatre's mandate is to foster Canadian playwrights, the show page also contains a

bio of the playwright. Other members of the creative team, such as actors, designers and the director are identified, but not profiled on this page. If the show has been produced previously, it also contains quotes from reviews of these earlier productions. All of these features can be clearly seen in the web page for Late Company, Touchstone Theatre's main stage production for the 2014-2015 season (Figure 6).

14/15 SEASON OUTREACH ABOUT MEDIA SUPPORT LAWYERS CONTACT

TOUCHstone THEATRE
Essential Canadian Plays

HOME

BUY VIP MEMBERSHIPS



LATE COMPANY

By Jordan Tannahill

One year after a tragedy, two couples sit down to dinner. Far from finding the closure they seek, the dinner strips bare their good intentions to reveal layers of parental, sexual, and political hypocrisy. A funny and moving exploration of a hot button issue, rendered in dynamic dialogue by an exciting young writer. Directed by Katrina Dunn and starring Touchstone favorite Kerry Sandomirsky.

"truly transcendent theatre... Get tickets soon. And bring a handkerchief."
Mooney on Theatre

November 21– 30, 2014
Vancity Culture Lab (The Cultch)
[1895 Venables St.](#)

Tues through Sat 8pm
Matinees 2pm Sat Nov 29, Sun Nov 23 & 30

2 for 1 Preview Thurs Nov 20 8pm

Tickets: tickets.thecultch.com
604-251-1363

A Touchstone Theatre Production

Directed by Katrina Dunn
Set Design by Pam Johnson
Costume Design by Amy McDougall
Lighting Design by Adrian Muir
Sound Design by Scott Zechner

Starring:
Daniel Doherty
Michael Kopsa
Gerry Mackay
Kerry Sandomirsky
Katharine Venour

Stage Manager: Marijka Asbeek Brusse
Assistant Stage Manager: Melissa McCowell
Publicist: Jodi Smith

About the Playwright

Jordan Tannahill is a Canadian playwright, filmmaker, and theatre director described by the Toronto Star as "one of Canada's most promising young independent theatre artists". Through his company Suburban Beast, he has developed and presented plays at theatres including [Buddies in Bad Times](#), [Canadian Stage](#), [Theatre Passe Muraille](#), and the [Theatre Centre](#). Jordan is the 2011 recipient of the Inside Out Film Festival's Emerging Canadian Artist Award, the 2011 Ken McDougall Award for Emerging Directors, and the 2012 Enbridge playRites Award. He runs a storefront theatre called [Videofag](#) in Toronto's Kensington Market with his partner William.

*"If it takes a village to raise a child, then who's to blame when one falls by the wayside? That's the question lurking at the heart of Jordan Tannahill's searing, unforgettable drama. There are no easy answers to be found here, only the shattered realities of two families struggling to put a terrible ordeal in the past." ******
Kevin Scott, Torontoist

Stay Informed:

E S S E N T I A L C A N A D I A N P L A Y S

Artist web design: Adam8

Figure 4: Late Company Web Page
(<http://www.touchstonetheatre.com/productions/late-company/>,
retrieved April 27, 2015)

2. Poster: Touchstone's poster designs focus on conveying basic information about the show. They have a central image connected with the show as well as simple information about the show (dates, title, author's name, and ticketing information). The names of the creative team also appear on the poster, although in a much smaller font. Featured at the bottom of the poster, and addresses for the company's website, their Facebook page and twitter username and hashtag. Dunn identifies the primary goals of the poster design to be attracting the attention of potential audience members and directing them to the company's web presence: "the most important thing the poster can do is direct people to our website to get more information." The poster for Late Company can be seen below in Figure 7.

Touchstone Theatre Presents



LATE COMPANY

BY JORDAN TANNAHILL

DIRECTED BY
Katrina Dunn

STARRING
Daniel Doheny
Michael Kopsa
Gerry Mackay
Kerry Sandomirsky
Katharine Venour

SET DESIGN
Pam Johnson

COSTUME DESIGN
Sydney Cavanagh

LIGHTING DESIGN
Adrian Muir

SOUND DESIGN
Scott Zechner

NOVEMBER 21-30 2014

VANCITY CULTURE LAB AT THE CULTCH, 1895 VENABLES ST
TICKETS AT 604.251.1363 OR TICKETS.THECULTCH.COM


TOUCHstone
THEATRE

Essential Canadian Plays

touchstonetheatre.com | [f /TouchstoneTheatre](https://www.facebook.com/TouchstoneTheatre) | [@TouchstoneInVan](https://twitter.com/TouchstoneInVan) #LateCompany



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des arts
du Canada



BRITISH COLUMBIA
ARTS COUNCIL



CITY OF
VANCOUVER



BRITISH
COLUMBIA

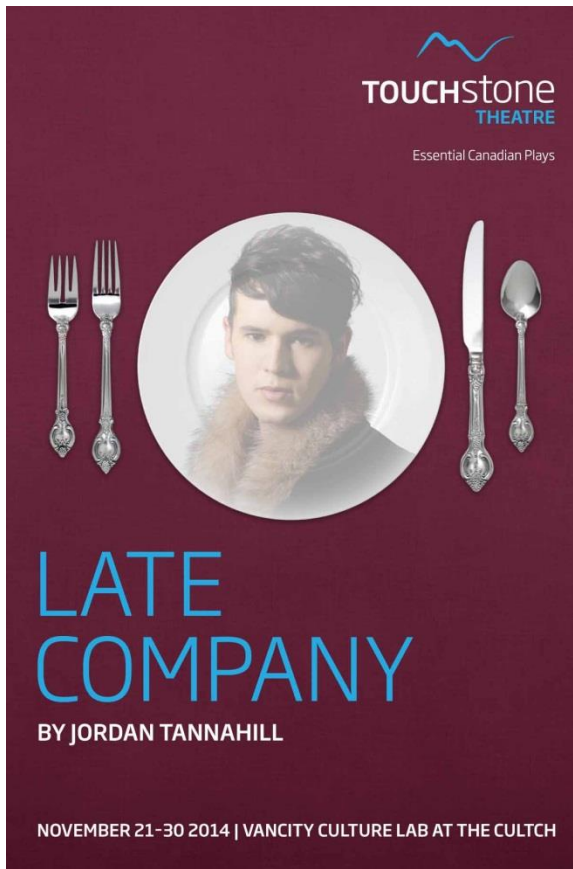


east
vancouver
GRAPHICS



FASTSIGNS
More than fast. More than signs.

Figure 5: Late Company Poster (Touchstone Theatre, 2014)



LATE COMPANY

"TRULY TRANSCENDENT THEATRE"
- Mooney on Theatre

BY JORDAN TANNAHILL

Directed By Katrina Dunn
Starring Daniel Doheny, Michael Kopsa, Gerry Mackay,
Kerry Sandomirsky, and Katharine Venour
Set Design by Pam Johnson | Costume Design by Sydney
Cavanagh | Lighting Design by Adrian Muir | Sound Design
by Scott Zechner

One year after a tragedy, two couples sit down to dinner. Far from finding the closure they seek, the dinner strips bare their good intentions to reveal layers of parental, sexual, and political hypocrisy. A funny and moving exploration of a hot button issue, rendered in dynamic dialogue by an exciting young writer.

NOVEMBER 21-30 2014

2FOR1 PREVIEW: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 8PM
VANCITY CULTURE LAB AT THE CULTCH, 1895 VENABLES ST
TICKETS AT 604.251.1363 OR TICKETS.THECULTCH.COM

touchstonetheatre.com
f /TouchstoneTheatre
@TouchstoneInVan #LateCompany

TOUCHstone
THEATRE
Essential Canadian Plays



Figure 7: Late Company Postcard (Front) Figure 6: Late Company Postcard (Back)

3. Postcards: Touchstone theatre also produces postcards using the design themes for the show. These are distributed by friends and volunteers of the company and according to Dunn are intended to reach the company's existing audience, in particular those who do not rely on the internet to get information about the shows. The information contained on the back of the card is the same as that found on the show's web page. The front of the card can be seen below in figure 8 and the back of the card in figure 9.
4. Newspaper Advertising: Because Touchstone Theatre is reducing its print presence, they now only advertise in one local newspaper, the Georgia Straight, a free local paper which focuses on local cultural events. It should be noted that the Georgia Straight is also a sponsor of the show, and donates advertising space as part of its sponsorship of the event and

the company (as it does with many local arts organizations). The print ads are similar to the posters designed for the show.

As can be seen in the above figures, branding of the show through aesthetic and design choices remains consistent across all of Touchstone Theatre's advertising and promotional material. These materials give audience members a sense of the tone and context of the show, while not providing too much information about content. The advertising design is kept clean, with highly symbolic imagery drawn from the script used as the basis for the visual design. The flat coloured tablecloth as a backdrop combined with the place setting refers to the play happening over dinner, while the portrait indicates the single character at the centre of the action. The lack of implied movement in the poster strongly suggests a play that is based on character and conversation rather than action. In this way, audiences can understand the kind of theatrical experience they will have at this performance.

The show summary presented by Touchstone on their website and other promotional material is deliberately short and vague. In her interview, Dunn made it clear that minimizing the availability of narrative information for audiences was a strategic decision: "I want audiences' first experience of the play – when they see it in the theatre – to be as pure as possible" (Dunn interview). This prioritizes the playwright and the script as the primary vehicle for the play's information, a position that can be directly related back to the company's mandate to "explore the contemporary Canadian play through content and form" (Touchstone Theatre, Mandate & History, 2015). The goal of the very brief show summary is to interest audience members in the production without telling them too much about the plot of the play itself. In this way, Dunn hopes that their audience's first exposure to the ideas of the play will be during the performance itself, allowing them to discover the text for the first time through the performance.

Because of its author-centric mandate, Touchstone also focuses more than usual on the author, making the author's biography a key element of their web presence. This can be seen most clearly in their website design (Figure 6), where the "About the Playwright" section is longer than the show summary (Touchstone Theatre, Late Company, 2015). Since supporting Canadian playwrights is part of the company's

mandate, information about the author becomes an essential part of the company's branding in a broader context, cementing its identity as being focused on the development and production of plays by Canadian playwrights.

Touchstone Theatre's mandate to encourage and support Canadian playwrights defines their approach to publicity and advertising. The posters, postcards and print advertising present visual cues of the play's tone and themes and directs audience members to the Touchstone website for more information. The information on their website deliberately limits the narrative information provided to audiences and focuses instead on the playwright and the themes of the play. By maintaining this focus on Canadian playwrights, Touchstone Theatre maintains its company branding by foregrounding its mandate.

6.1.2 Reviews and Social Media

In the recent past, there has been a significant shift in how theatre companies make use of reviews and other media-driven audience preparation strategies. Traditionally, reviews in print publications have been an important part of publicizing theatrical events. However, Dunn points out that there has been a steady decline in local arts coverage by mainstream print media, as local newsrooms are cut in favour of more cost-effective national reporting strategies (Dunn interview). Smaller theatre companies have had to turn to other sources to reach their audiences. Not only have more informal reviews for local blogs become more important, but social media strategies are becoming increasingly central to companies' approaches to audience preparation.

The Georgia Straight is one of the few local newspapers to reliably publish theatre reviews. Because it is such an essential source for local arts information, many organizations rely on exposure in that weekly newspaper to drive ticket sales and attract audiences. A search of reviews in local newspapers reveals that, *The Vancouver Sun* published an interview with an actor that mentioned several of her performances (Conner, 2014) and *The Province* did a profile of the playwright, Jordan Tannahill (Gee, 2014), neither published a review of the performance. In comparison, for *Late Company*, the Georgia Straight published two articles specifically focusing on the production. The first was a feature interview with the playwright, Jordan Tannahill, which focused on the

social issues addressed in *Late Company* (Thomas, 2014a). That article appeared as an arts feature the week before the opening of the show, and profiled the playwright, giving audiences a chance to understand the personality behind the play. A review of *Late Company* appeared after the premiere, and likewise appeared in the *Georgia Straight* (Thomas, 2014b). The review gives a summary of the play, and evaluates the Touchstone production's directing, acting and design. Together, the *Georgia Straight* articles give audiences insight into the play and its author, providing significant contextual information to audiences.

The lack of local arts journalism in mainstream print media has pushed theatre companies to rely more heavily on blogs and online reviews. As Dunn points, out, "As newspapers eliminate their theatre coverage, people turn to other sources to find out about shows" (Dunn interview). These are typically written by volunteer writers who create reviews in exchange for tickets to the opening night or preview presentation of a performance. The approaches of review websites vary, with some (such as vancouverplays.com) posting reviews which are similar to professional reviews, focusing particularly on the quality of the performances, design and artistic expression. Other sites (such as vancitybuzz.com) rely instead on informal impressions and personal experience to create a connection with performances. These different approaches to review writing create a diverse landscape of audience priming techniques. There has been no research to date on the impact of online reviews and the ways that review content affects either audience experience or ticket sales. Such research could be vitally important to the continued prosperity of theatrical mediations, but is well beyond the scope of this doctoral research.

Touchstone Theatre issues press releases, which are e-mailed to news outlets and websites which typically feature theatre reviews. The press release can also be found on their website at touchstonetheatre.com. The information in the press release is slightly more detailed than what is provided on the web pages for the show. Like the online copy, the press release gives minimal detail about the plot, focusing instead on creators, previous productions and details about the origins and themes of the play. Many website reviews make extensive use of the copy provided in the press release, a practice which is more unusual in more professional reviews. By way of contrast, the

review of Late Company posted on vancouverscape.com has around 80% of its text taken directly or slightly adapted from the Touchstone Theatre press release. The review published in the Georgia Straight, however, does not use any of the copy directly, focusing instead on the author's impression of the production. Other websites (such as vancitybuzz.com) specifically instruct their reviewers not to use materials from the press releases in their reviews, except as a way of ensuring the proper spelling of names and other technical details (Cecilia correspondence). Unfortunately, that site did not review Late Company specifically, making that comparison more difficult.

From a standpoint, Touchstone Theatre's strategy is relatively typical of smaller Canadian theatre companies. In addition to their website, they have a Twitter feed, a Facebook page and a YouTube channel. They made use of all three platforms in connection to Late Company.

1. Facebook: Touchstone's Facebook page had informational posts about the production in the days and weeks leading up to the performance, and ticket reminder posts during the production itself. In addition, they created an event page and invited their contact list to the production that way.
2. Twitter: Touchstone began posting with the hashtag [#LateCompany] roughly one month before the show. Most of the posts gave additional information about the creative team (actors, designers, director & author). In the week before the show, they linked to a number of reviews of previous productions of Late Company. During the run, their feed mostly consisted of invitations and ticket purchasing reminders for the show, and links to several online reviews.
3. YouTube: A video consisting of interviews with the director and actors was posted to Touchstone's YouTube channel two days before the show opened.

As Dunn pointed out in her interview, Touchstone Theatre and many local theatre companies are struggling with finding the most effective ways to use social media platforms to promote their productions. Currently, their main goal is to build an online community around their social media platforms in order to make materials published there more effective. As such, while their social media content is the same as much of

their other online and printed material, they are attempting to find new ways to make use of these platforms to inform existing audiences and perhaps attract new ones.

6.1.3 Location-based framing

Touchstone Theatre uses a wide variety of venues across Vancouver for its productions, having produced shows at The Cultch, the Firehall Theatre and Studio 16 in recent seasons (Touchstone Theatre, 2015). This is not unusual for smaller professional theatre companies without dedicated spaces for their productions (such as Pi Theatre or Theatre Replacement). The lack of a consistent venue makes it challenging for theatre companies to personalize and control their venues and limits what they are able to do to personalize location-based framing. As a result, most professional theatre companies set up their performance spaces in similar ways regardless of the specific show they are presenting.

As Esslin points out (1987), there are three primary ways in which the theatrical setting can prepare audiences: (1) architecture, (2) programs and posted information and (3) social conventions specific to theatre performance. While Touchstone Theatre does make use of these elements, the scope of their potential actions is constrained.

The theatres in which Touchstone Theatre presents its plays act similarly as behaviour settings. Upon entering the building and either presenting or picking up their tickets, audience members enter the theatre's lobby. There, they see and meet other people who are seeing the show along with them and are given a chance to purchase food or drinks to consume before or during the performance. The changes in atmosphere and setting allow audiences to prepare for the show (Esslin, 1987) in ways reminiscent of Barker's (1968) "behaviour settings." The setting acts as contextual framing for audiences, triggering the behavioural and cognitive shifts expected of them as audience members.

All of the theatre spaces which Touchstone uses are flexible black box theatres. Black box theatres can be configured according to the needs of an individual performance, but they almost always feature a stage area which contains the set, and an audience seating area which allows for clear sightlines. In my experience of these

theatres, curtains are not typically used to divide the stage from the audience space, and the sets for the performance are visible to audience members before the performance itself begins. The ability to see the sets gives audiences insights into the performance, contributing to semantic priming. While the architectural designs of the lobby and design of the theatrical space serve primarily to shift the spectators' behavioural patterns, their exposure to the set before the show begins also serves as semantic priming that helps shape their interpretations and affective responses to the play.

When audiences arrive at the theatre, they are presented with information about the creative team behind the production. At a typical Touchstone Theatre production, pictures and biographies of the creative team are posted on the walls of the lobby. This information is supplemented by the show's program, which has additional information about the show and the company. The program for *Late Company* includes written messages from both the playwright and director, bios of the creative team, and information about Touchstone Theatre's mandate and current activities. The program also contains advertising from other arts organizations and the show's sponsors, establishing Touchstone Theatre as being connected within the wider community.

As with their promotional materials, Touchstone Theatre has made a conscious decision not to post plot synopses in either the lobby space or the programs themselves. By not revealing narrative information, Dunn hopes to make "audiences' first experience of the play... as pure as possible" by not shaping their interpretation with narrative information (Dunn interview). The decision to limit the content priming effects to this extent is an unusual step for a theatre company. Touchstone's mandate is to support and encourage Canadian playwrights, and "everything [they] do is designed to highlight the playwright and the text" (Dunn interview). Touchstone's decision not to provide narrative information represents their commitment to the play text through their priming strategy.

Dunn has also noticed a significant change in the social and behavioural conventions of theatergoing in the last decade. "Audiences, in particular young audiences, seem to be less aware of how they're supposed to behave in a theatre" (Dunn interview). Expectations of the theatrical experience are becoming less formal and

more casual, and audiences are generally less cognizant of the conventional expectations. “Pre-show announcements – telling people to turn off their phones for example – are an important tool for letting audiences know they’re in a theatre and what’s expected of them” (Dunn interview). Announcements that acknowledge a show’s sponsors and encourage audience members to be considerate of other spectators by turning their phones off and remaining quiet during the show are now common at stage theatre performances. Dunn’s observations correlate with my informal observations as an audience member; pre-show announcements in both stage theatre and movie theatres have become much more directive of audience behaviour in recent years. Dunn suggests that these announcements are necessary because of a weakening of the social-behavioural constraints presented by the behaviour setting of theatres.

Touchstone Theatre also uses food and drink as part of their audience preparation strategy. The food and drink at Touchstone Theatre performances are not show-specific. In her interview, Dunn emphasised alcohol as an important audience preparation strategy as alcohol “helps people relax and makes them more engaged” (Dunn interview). I have not been able to find any studies that correlate alcohol consumption with audience receptivity, making it difficult to measure whether the correlation between alcohol consumption and enjoyment is accurate. The availability of alcohol may also act as a contextual frame, indicating a more casual social space to audiences.

The audience preparation strategies used by Touchstone Theatre are typical of the ways in which small Canadian professional theatre companies approach their audiences. In my own experience as a theatre audience member, the audience preparation strategies used by Touchstone can be found across the country. Their promotional materials capture the essence of the show simply, using mostly thematic or genre-based cues. Since promotional activities are now mostly online, a significant goal of their other publicity is to direct audiences to the company’s website for more information. The Touchstone Theatre website contains one simple page for each production, making it easy to find information while limiting the amount of detail that is available to audiences. The information on the company’s website is reproduced across a number of social media platforms, and is supplemented by previews and reviews on

various local culture-focused websites. And the theatrical experience, while generic, still leverages architectural and cultural behavioural cues to manage audience experience and trigger the conceptual priming and other cognitive modes conducive to spectatorship. The example given by Touchstone Theatre's approach to audience preparation is typical of this segment of the Canadian theatre landscape and, as such, represents a useful reference point in an analysis of audience strategies.

6.2 Case 2: PuSh International Performing Arts Festival

The PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (PuSh Festival) is a major theatre and performance festival in Vancouver. They aim to present work produced by theatre companies from around the world which are “visionary, genre-bending, multi-disciplined, startling and original” (PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, 2015, About & History). The works they present cover a wide range of performing arts, including music, dance, theatre, film and many hybrid performance types. The PuSh Festival does not produce shows internally, and only recently began presenting performances outside of the festival, which usually takes place in late January and early February.

The festival format distinguishes the audience preparation strategies employed by the PuSh Festival from that of the other two companies explored here. Their publicity and advertising efforts are focused on the festival itself rather than individual performances. Since most of the individual performances have only a few showings, venue preparation tends to be minimal for each individual show. The festival also has a special venue called “Club PuSh” which is set up as a cabaret performance space.

In order to find out more about the specific strategies used by the PuSh Festival I interviewed their communications manager, Kara Gibbs on July 25, 2012. The semi-structured interview focused on audience preparation and promotional strategies used by the PuSh Festival. The goal of the interview was to identify the ways in which PuSh prepares their audience. The PuSh Festival's use of audience preparation reflects audience preparation strategies used in a festival format and the relationship that a presenter has to a show.

6.2.1 Advertising and Publicity

The PuSh Festival branding is primarily focused on creating an atmosphere of theatrical risk-taking and adventurousness for their audiences: “They know the PuSh Festival puts on interesting, adventurous work and they know that what they see will be of high quality” (Gibbs interview). This core identity is driven by the company’s mission: “The PuSh International Performing Arts Festival engages and enriches audiences with adventurous contemporary works in a spirit of innovation and dialogue” (PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, 2015, About & History). As with most artistic organizations, the PuSh Festival’s mission statement drives the aesthetics and design of all promotional materials, advertising and company websites.

According to Gibbs, the PuSh Festival recently changed their promotional strategy. Until recently, the festival posters used pictures of shows that were part of the festival: “2012 was the last year we used a photograph provided for one of the pieces” (Gibbs interview). Since 2013, the company has used pictures produced specifically to reflect the identity and mission of the company rather than specific works. The 2013 poster, for instance, used the slogan “cross the line” paired with pictures of shoes crossing lines as the focal point of the advertising campaign. The “cross the line” slogan was still in place for the 2015 festival, this time accompanied by a photo of an elderly woman in a police lineup holding a sign with the slogan (see Figure 10). This image was intended to suggest that acts of artistic daring are not age-specific, but involve some (metaphorical) danger. The images on the festival posters are the centrepieces of the PuSh Festival’s promotional materials, appearing in all of its advertising as well as on the festival program.

As with Touchstone Theatre, the PuSh Festival uses a number of means of reaching its audience, all while maintaining the same image as their central appeal to audiences. This allows for coherent branding to occur surrounding the festival in spite of the wide range of performances that are featured as part of the event.



Figure 8: PuSh Festival 2015 Poster

1. Website: As with most modern arts organizations, the PuSh Festival

website is the centrepiece of their branding and promotional material. Because the company's main activity is the creation of a three-week performance festival, they use the website as a way of organizing materials about artists and performances and schedules for potential audience members. Their website allows people to sort through the performances in many ways, encouraging them to explore and find shows that will interest them. The section for each show generally has information about the artist, a synopsis of the show and links to pictures or reviews of the show from other cities (almost all PuSh Festival shows have been previously presented elsewhere). The website also contains information about the company, including their youth program, staff, board of directors, as well as soliciting donations to the organization.

The copy for the performances the PuSh Festival presents is written by the PuSh festival, "based on stuff that's been provided by the artists with information gleaned from reviews and other ways that people have described the show" (Gibbs interview). The descriptions of the shows focus on providing information about "the content of the piece and also what the experience is going to be for the audience member" (Gibbs interview). The central branding of the festival encourages show descriptions to emphasise the artistic risks taken with the piece in order to reinforce the curatorial message of the festival, and instructions are forwarded to participating productions indicating this fact. For example, the online description for *7 Important Things* (presented at the 2015 festival) reads as follows:

"George Acheson was a rebel with a cause. At age 16 he was kicked out of the house by his father because he wouldn't cut his hair—it was a sign of things to come. He lived the '60s counterculture, embraced the '70s Punk movement, and somehow scraped through the years of reaction that followed. Now, together with collaborator Nadia Ross, he's going to tell you his story. Like many boomers, Acheson looked at his parents' values and found them wanting; the '50s were a bubble of conformity that

he helped burst. What followed, as we know, were some big victories and some crushing defeats. This isn't a hopeless story, although it's a sad one. It's about things worth fighting for, and things worth fighting against. 7 Important Things from Quebec's STO Union is a raw, vital performance." (<http://pushfestival.ca/shows/7-important-things/>)

This description focuses on the historical rebelliousness of the performer, associating his sense of daring with the performance. While these elements are also present on the website for the original performance at the STO Union Theatre Company, the language on the PuSh Festival website is more emotionally charged than the original. For the PuSh Festival audience, the performer scraped through the years, burst bubbles of conformity and suffered crushing defeats on his way to creating a performance that was both raw and vital. This shift in vocabulary from descriptive to emotional helps reinforce the kinds of audience experience that the PuSh Festival wants its audience to have.

PuSh also uses a blog built into their website as a promotional tool. Posts to the blog are meant to contextualize the festival and its performances. Many of the posts are connected to their Youth Academy, a program which allows local students to interact more closely with the festival and the artists whose work is being presented. This allows the PuSh Festival to highlight their educational activities, and give audiences a behind-the-scenes look into the way the festival is being run. The blog also features guest posts by co-presenters and curatorial statements by the original creators of some of the works, giving additional insight into the performances being presented. Often, the blog posts diverge somewhat from the consistent messaging of the website as a whole, allowing for a shift in focus on the part of readers.

2. Festival Program: The second key element of the PuSh Festival's promotional material is the festival program, which provides details of the shows in the festival. This is available online, but is also printed and distributed in local coffee shops. The show details in the program are the

same as they appear on the website, and are largely provided by the artists who created the work. In their program, the PuSh Festival tries to “have the same kind of consistency [as the website] and a little more formality” (Gibbs interview).

Because of the popularity of the festival and the wide distribution of their programs, the PuSh Festival is able to attract a lot of external advertising. The program therefore becomes a significant source of revenue for the company, both in terms of direct revenue and by enhancing their ability to attract corporate sponsors. A significant proportion of the ads are for other arts organizations and festivals, making the program effective as an outreach tool for other organizations seeking similar audiences. These ads also serve to position the PuSh Festival within the larger artistic community and reinforce their importance to local forms of artistic expression.

3. Posters: The PuSh Festival also distributes posters widely across Vancouver. These posters (see Figure 10) are simple, containing only the primary photo for the festival, its logo and the web address of the company. Some of the poster formats also contain the logos of the festival’s sponsors. As Gibbs pointed out in her interview, the primary purpose of the poster is to direct people to the company’s website where they can get additional information.

4. Online ads: The PuSh Festival also publishes ads online. These are primarily placed on other arts organizations, but also appear on websites for local news organizations. Like the posters, the online ads are simple, serving primarily to connect audiences with the company's website. An example of one of their online banner ads can be seen in figure 11.



Figure 9: PuSh Festival online banner ad

5. Print Advertising: The PuSh Festival advertises widely in local print publications in the period leading up to the beginning of the festival. In many cases, these ads are part of sponsorship arrangements with media companies, such as the Georgia Straight. Print ads are also placed in local newspapers, magazines and the programs of other arts' organizations performance events. The content of these print ads is the same as for the poster: a photograph, some logos and the web address. As with the posters, the purpose of the advertising is to direct people to the PuSh Festival website. The ad in Figure 12 appeared in the Georgia

Straight on January 26, 2015.



Figure 10: PuSh Festival Ad - Georgia Straight, January 26, 2015

The festival format adds a level of complexity when it comes to semantic priming strategies. The design of their publicity, including the posters, programs and advertising seen above emphasises the adventurousness of the festival, providing an initial layer of thematic priming that is intended to represent the curatorial vision of the festival as a whole. Its promotional design strategy remains simple: between one and three images are selected based on a slogan connected to the company's mandate. The emphasis on artistic risk-taking is also important, as audiences are more likely to "take a risk to see an artist they never heard of before or come to a show that they don't really have any connection with, if they have a connection with the festival" (Gibbs interview). The PuSh Festival's consistent emphasis on artistic risk-taking acts as thematic priming, giving audiences insight into the kinds of experiences they can expect from the festival as a whole.

The website and program are the core of the company's promotional material. Audiences can access information about the performances in a variety of ways, while the identity of the company and its curatorial ideas are reinforced through the writing and design strategies outlined above. The copy written by the PuSh Festival for each show emphasises audience experience and artistic risk-taking (thematic priming), while providing basic information about the performance as well (content priming). This messaging allows the PuSh festival to manage the expectations of audience members, preparing them to witness a certain kind of performance event. The PuSh festival orients their publicity strategy toward contextual cues, aiming to shape the audience behaviour more generally rather than relying on content priming to change audience interpretations of individual shows. In this way, the PuSh Festival aims to shape the culture of their audiences, creating the conditions for spectatorship around their mandate of presenting visionary and original performance art.

6.2.2 Reviews and Social Media

The PuSh International Performing Arts Festival is able to attract a significant amount of media attention. Unlike smaller theatre companies, reviews and previews of PuSh Festival shows are frequently featured in mainstream news publications such as the Globe and Mail, the Vancouver Sun or the CBC. The festival is also aware of the increasing influence of online reviews and they feature two prominent local blogs as media sponsors for the festival.

Most of the media coverage for the PuSh Festival concentrates on the festival as a whole, recommending to their readers which shows they should see. Largely, this is due to the limited run of each show within the festival (most only run for a few days), which makes reviews much less useful as a strategy for attracting audiences. The audience guide format is also easy for publications to put together because, while it requires some expertise, it does not require the writer to go and see all of the shows before writing the article. In addition, publications which are part of larger media conglomerates can often use reviews published in other cities where the works have previously been performed. The guides themselves are important resources for potential audience members, as they present smaller curated lists within the larger festival to help

narrow the range of choices and make the decision to see a show easier. Because the lists only have enough space for a few sentences about each show, the amount of content priming that can be attributed to these previews is limited. This approach concentrates on the overall branding of the festival, serving to further reinforce the festival's marketing strategy.

The PuSh Festival blog provides an important social media tool for them to reach out to audiences. On the blog, each show has a curatorial statement where "whoever was responsible for bringing the piece into the festival talks about their relationship to the piece" (Gibbs interview), and links to previous reviews and video documentation of shows are also provided. While audiences could comment and interact on the blog, the push festival "[tends] not to get comments on our blog. We tend to get more feedback and discussion on Facebook and Twitter because they're built more for people to dialogue" (Gibbs interview).

The PuSh Festival maintains active social media profiles on a number of platforms. As with the marketing strategy for the festival as a whole, the dominant strategy seems to be attracting audience members to the company's website where they can access more complete information. Social media platforms also allow audience members to comment about the festival in interesting ways, providing a way for the festival to interact directly with its audience. These comments tend to come from a small number of online participants, however, raising questions as to its effectiveness as an outreach tool.

1. Facebook: Posts on the PuSh Festival's page fall mostly into three broad categories: links to articles posted on the PuSh festival website, links to reviews published by media outlets, and galleries of photos taken during the festival. However, in spite of having over 6,000 people following their page, commenting activity is limited, suggesting that users are not seeing this page as an opportunity to connect with festival organizers.
2. Twitter: The company's twitter feed is populated mostly by links to the PuSh website and to external reviews of the shows that make up the festival. This feed has 7000 followers, many of whom link back to the company's user name when posting comments or photos. Many of the PuSh Festival's

followers and posters that link to their user name are artistic organizations and creators, making it somewhat difficult to determine the actual number of audience members using twitter as a source of information about the festival's activities.

3. Instagram: The PuSh Festival Instagram feed features photos of the shows and events related to the production of the festival. The purpose of the Instagram account seems to be the creation and dissemination of documentation rather than the direct promotion of the shows. The photos on the Instagram feed are frequently used as content for Twitter and Facebook posts. Just over 450 people follow the PuSh festival on Instagram.
4. YouTube: As with the festival program and website, the content of the PuSh Festival's YouTube account is primarily created by the individual creators of the shows featured in the festival. The PuSh Festival adds logos and festival performance information, but otherwise leaves the creators' videos intact. The PuSh festival's intensive use of trailer videos is indicative of recent changes in theatrical promotion strategies that encourage the creation of video trailers for theatrical productions. The Festival's playlist for 2015 features 17 trailers for shows in the festival, up from 11 in 2014 and only 2 in 2013. Prior to this, their YouTube channel was mostly used to distribute special event recordings and performer interviews. The frequency of interview and documentation videos has decreased over the same period as the increase in show trailers. The PuSh Festival's use of YouTube is transitioning from being primarily a social media / documentation tool to being an active part of their promotional strategy. As of May 5, 2015, the PuSh Festival YouTube Page has 120 followers, and the video trailers for the 2015 festival had between 700 and 1800 views each.

The PuSh Festival makes use of a range of media strategies to promote the festival and shape the expectations of audience members. Traditional print and mainstream online media are still important for the festival, and they are large enough within their niche to attract a significant amount of media attention. As with other arts organizations, the festival has an increasing reliance on more informal blogs and social media to reach their audience quickly within the limited time window of the festival.

The PuSh Festival leverages their social media accounts to increase the impact of their media coverage primarily by using them to direct traffic to their website. Their Facebook and Twitter presence in particular seems to be focused on directing traffic either to online reviews or to the pushfestival.ca website. Their YouTube presence seems to be undergoing a transition; while traditionally it was used to document the festival, it is increasingly being used as a promotional tool which showcases trailer videos for performances in the festival. Documentation about the festival is now primarily stored in the festival's Instagram account, although there are some pictures there which also serve a more promotional purpose. The PuSh Festival's use of social media as a content creator is clearly evolving, making this aspect of their audience preparation strategy difficult to summarize effectively. The changes being made at the PuSh Festival echo Dunn's assertion in the Touchstone Theatre interview that theatre companies are in the midst of a period of experimentation with different social media strategies. I suspect that, over the next 3-5 years, the use of social media for stage theatre companies will coalesce around new patterns, perhaps similar to those currently used by the PuSh Festival.

6.2.3 Location-based Priming

The PuSh Festival does remarkably little location-based audience preparation, leaving the information design of lobby spaces in the hands of individual creators. As a result their use of theatrical lobbies tends to be generic. The PuSh Festival has created an unusual cabaret venue called Club PuSh, where audiences can eat and drink while watching both ticketed and impromptu performances.

Performances for the PuSh Festival use a variety of established live performance venues across Vancouver. The normal range of architectural strategies for establishing social and cultural contexts is present. The festival normally has programs (and occasionally banner signs) at the venues as well, but this is the limit of their institutional involvement. All other signage and information is left to the discretion of individual artists. Some performances include semantic priming information such as plot synopses or artist bios, while other shows have no additional information available to audience members. Likewise, while some performances may have their own programs, most simply have

copies of the festival program available to audiences. Because each show has a limited run, they tend not to personalize the lobbies by posting bios and pictures. The PuSh festival has “sponsor signage that recognizes the people who have sponsored the festival and our own PuSh branded signage” (Gibbs interview) that are present in the space. Together, these patterns of lobby preparation result in some thematic priming being provided to audiences, with comparatively little content priming.

In addition to the usual information about cell phones and sponsors, the pre-show speech for the PuSh Festival shows includes information about social media. Audiences are given information about the company’s Facebook and Twitter feeds and encouraged to post to social media after the completion of the show. As seen above, online activity on these sites seems to indicate that Twitter is the platform of choice for audience members reacting to performances. This slight change to the pre-show speech reinforces their social media strategy and helps to open discussions with audiences after the show and festival are complete.

The PuSh Festival also has a cabaret space called Club PuSh. The space is set up as a restaurant, with food and drink available to audience members. This establishes Club PuSh as being more informal and experimental. Rather than the experience at Club PuSh being about going to see a show, it is framed as a social experience where festival goers can spend time in the company of others who are also attending events. To further reinforce this idea, the club remains open even when there isn’t a ticketed show being presented, allowing it to act as a social hub for festival goers.

Gibbs describes two patterns of audience behaviour in Club PuSh. When the space is open as a restaurant or when bands are playing, audience members frequently talk to each other and tend to pay less attention to the performers. Within this social context, the live performance is of secondary importance, and social interactions become the primary attraction. However, “during [ticketed] marquee performances, people aren’t really getting up and talking. It is certainly a place where people are there to see the performances” (Gibbs interview). This change in audience behaviour based on ticket purchase provides compelling anecdotal evidence of the impact of tickets and exclusive spaces on audience behaviour and reception.

While the promotional strategies used by PuSh are more elaborate than Touchstone Theatre's, the concepts that drive their promotional and community-building efforts are consistent. Company branding plays an important role, with the PuSh Festival mandate and curatorial vision being highlighted in their promotional material. Using "crossing the line" as their slogan and organizing principle, the PuSh Festival prepares audiences to see performances that are out of the ordinary, priming their expectations in relation to specific patterns of spectatorship. This occurs in part because of the focus of the PuSh Festival on using its mandate to present a range of adventurous and risk-taking performances, a thematic profile which allows audiences to have confidence in the kinds of artistic experiences they will have at a PuSh Festival show. Generally, the shows are sold based on their creators' ability to take artistic risks within the context of a particular artistic tradition. The perception of artistic risk is tied directly to the PuSh Festival mandate and curatorial vision, and this branding is central to the promotional and presentational strategies used by the PuSh Festival.

6.3 Case 3: Music on Main

Music on Main is a relatively new modern classical music production company in Vancouver. Producing music since 2006, they aim to create accessible, informal musical experiences that open classical music up for new audiences (Music on Main; About Us). While they do not produce theatrical events, their innovative approach to audience preparation gives insights into how producers of artistic events might change their framing strategies. Music on Main makes use of contextual priming and the creation of a unique behaviour setting to create effective frames for their musical events.

The inclusion of Music on Main in this analysis is due to its influence on framing strategies in the local artistic community. This was evident in the other interviews conducted, as Kara Gibbs at The PuSh Festival cited Music on Main as a significant influence on the festival's practices, in particular their design for the Club PuSh cabaret venue. While the publicity strategies employed by Music on Main are less relevant to a theatrical context, they provide important contextual information about the creation of artistic contexts for live performance events. Their example is particularly valuable when it comes to their creative use of unconventional performance spaces.

The analysis in this section is based on an interview with Music on Main's artistic director, David Pay, on July 25, 2012, using a semi-structured interview strategy focusing on audience preparation techniques. The data in the interview was triangulated using primary publicity and audience preparation documents provided from the Music on Main archive, as well as the company's website (musiconmain.ca). These various sources of information all illustrate the ways in which the company's focus on creating a casual art-focused environment establishes a unique context for artistic spectatorship in Vancouver's music scene.

6.3.1 Advertising and Publicity

As a relatively new artistic organization, Music on Main takes a very cautious approach to pre-show publicity. Their approach specifically aims to limit the expense of advertising while maximising its impact: "Every dollar I spend here I want to see a return on. I want to see if it's valuable. I would never do any advertising unless I believed that it would actively generate ticket sale" (Pay interview). While Music on Main prints a small number of brochures and posters for each show, their primary focus is using their web presence to prepare audiences for their musical experience. Rather than advertising heavily, they focus instead on the creation of a community of audience members.

The relationship between cost and effectiveness at reaching audience is the central consideration of Music on Main when determining their promotional strategies (Pay interview). As a result, they engage relatively heavily with online marketing rather than print marketing, due to the significant costs of reproducing their publicity.


1. Website: The design of the Music on Main website is similar to that of the PuSh Festival. The website itself is dominated by information about upcoming events. It includes search options, lists of concerts and a calendar of events primarily populated by Music on Main events, but also containing information about other local artistic productions.

Each Music on Main performance also has its own web page, outlining the event and explaining a little about what will happen there. Information about concert times, locations and ticketing are clearly visible on the page. Details of each performance on the website include the names of the performers as well as the overall goal or vision for the evening. Their promotional text

focuses on “[trying] to uncover the feeling that the audience is going to have” (Pay interview). In an attempt to create a casual atmosphere for modern classical music, performances are framed as “fun” and “casual yet engaged” (Pay interview).


After the performance, the page for that event is updated with videos and pictures of the evening. While most of the photos feature the performers, many also showcase the performance space and the audience members, emphasizing the social nature of Music on Main’s productions.

The web page for Music for the Winter Solstice clearly illustrates these choices on the part of the company and is reproduced here in Figures 13 and 14.

music on main 

search this site [buy tickets](#) [donate](#) [join mailing list](#)

[home](#) [about us](#) [our concerts](#) [culture calendar](#) [learn](#) [contact us](#)



• • •

Music for the Winter Solstice

Friday, December 12, 2014
8:00 PM
 featuring:
 Caroline Shaw (voice & violin)
 Steve Maddock (voice)
 Rachel Iwaasa (piano)
 COULOIR (Ariel Barnes, cello & Heidi Krutzen, harp)

Sold out! Limited standing room only tickets available at the door.

Heritage Hall
 3102 Main Street (at East 15th, in East Van) | [google map](#)

Doors and Bar open at 7:00 pm | Concert starts at 8:00 pm
 General Admission seating. All ages welcome.

Music on Main celebrates the winter season with a new tradition: a concert inspired by the solstice.

As the nights get cold and dark, great music brings us together. Join new and old friends at Heritage Hall for a gorgeous programme including works by Arvo Pärt, Alfredo Santa Ana, and Music on Main's **Composer In Residence Caroline Shaw** – the youngest ever winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Music.

Together with Caroline, Artistic Director David Pay has brought together music from composers as diverse as Franz Schubert and Caroline Lizotte, Claude Debussy and the Wyrd Sisters. It's an evening that promises warmth and joy.

Read more about the concert in the [Georgia Straight's](#) interview with Caroline Shaw and Ariel Barnes.

Sold out! Limited standing room only tickets available at the door.

[< prev](#)
[next >](#)

Figure 11: Music for the Winter Solstice (Part 1), Music on Main website (retrieved from <http://www.musiconmain.ca/concerts/music-for-the-winter-solstice/>, May 26, 2015)

programme includes

Caroline Shaw (born 1982)
Improvisations for violin and voice

The Wyrd Sisters
The Spirit of Solstice, arr. Caroline Shaw & Steve Maddock

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Flood ("Wasserflut" from "Winterreise") translated by Michael Symmons Roberts

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
Beau Soir for cello and harp

Jean Coulthard (1908-2000)
Image astrale for solo piano

Alfredo Santa Ana (born 1980)
A Short Song for the Longest Night of the Year (world premiere)

Arvo Pärt (born 1935)
Spiegel im Spiegel for violin and piano

Caroline Lizotte (born 1969)
Close for Couloir for cello and harp

Caroline Shaw (born 1982)
Winter Carol (world premiere)

tickets

Sold out! Limited standing room only tickets available at the door.
Single Tickets \$39 (\$15 students)

General Admission. Arrive early for best selection of seats, and enjoy a drink at the bar.

related info

[Caroline Shaw](#)

[Arvo Pärt on last.fm](#)

[Alfredo Santa Ana](#)

[Steve Maddock](#)

[Rachel Iwaasa](#)

[Couloir](#)

photos



[buy tickets](#) [donate](#) [join mailing list](#)

[home](#)

[about us](#)

[about music on main](#)

[about david pay](#)

[composer in residence](#)

[staff listing](#)

[board of directors](#)

[press](#)

[our concerts](#)

[culture calendar](#)

[learn](#)

[composer in residence](#)

[the composer essay](#)

[project](#)

[faq](#)

[news](#)

[contact us](#)

[donate](#)

[join mailing list](#)

[buy tickets](#)

search this site

© 2015 Music on Main. All Rights Reserved. Site by Hey Shauna.

Figure 12: Music for the Winter Solstice (Part 1), Music on Main website (retrieved from <http://www.musiconmain.ca/concerts/music-for-the-winter-solstice/>, May 26, 2015)

2. Postcards: Many performances are promoted using postcards, which are distributed to supporters and music stores. The information and images contained on these cards are the same as on the web page (with somewhat less detail), and provide continuity in the visual promotion of the concert. The web address of the company is prominently featured on both the front and the back of the postcard, emphasizing the importance of the website as the primary source of information about the concert. The front and back of the postcards for Music for the Winter Solstice can be seen in Figure 15 below.



Figure 13: Music for the Winter Solstice postcard. Front (left) & Back (right). Music on Main, 2014.

3. Posters: Most Music on Main performances do not have posters, and when they are created for an event, they are printed in small numbers. Posters are placed only at strategically important locations such as music stores and

music schools. The designs of the posters are the same as the fronts of the postcards with the addition of some ticketing information and sponsors' logos.

4. Online and Print Advertising: David Pay is careful about spending money on advertising, and as a result, each concert is publicized differently. 2012 was “the first season where we’ve had all four of our main series with posters. So not every concert gets a poster. Not every concert gets an ad in the Georgia Straight” (Pay interview). While each show gets a page on the company website, in 2012, online ads were not part of Music on Main’s publicity strategy (Pay interview).

Music on Main makes very little use of conventional advertising and publicity to promote their musical performances. In part, this is due to their expressed desire to spend as little as possible on promotion in order to stretch their budget (Pay interview). It also represents a skepticism about the effectiveness of such advertising and whether it is an appropriate use of funds for an artistic organization with an already limited budget. It remains to be seen whether or not this strategy changes as Music on Main develops, although their ability to sell out shows without a significant amount of direct publicity points to significant successes in attracting audiences with the means that they already have at their disposal.

6.3.2 Reviews and Social Media

Because Music on Main’s events are all single performances, reviews are of limited usefulness for promoting their events. Articles about Music on main tend to focus on the overall vision of the company, reinforcing the community-based orientation of Music on Main’s audience relations strategy. Following this approach, the company also makes extensive use of social media as a way of connecting with and building their audience through informal social connections.

Music on Main has also been successful at attracting the attention of larger media outlets, with profiles of the company published in The Vancouver Sun and The Globe and Mail. The Globe and Mail piece by Marsha Lederman (December 19, 2014) is particularly notable since it focuses on an interview with Pay that outlines many of the company’s approaches to production, curation and audience relations. In the interview,

Pay outlines the importance of social connection and accessibility as the driving forces behind Music on Main (Lederman, December 19, 2014). Audience members are all greeted individually when they arrive in the space in an attempt to create a “homey atmosphere” (Pay interview). In spite of the casual nature of the space, performers are often “shocked by the level of intensity with which the audience is listening” (Pay interview). The informality and accessibility of their events is positioned as a major selling point, allowing for the presentation of much more experimental artistic work. These elements work together to help show potential audience members the kind of experience they will have regardless of the specific content of performances (Lederman, December 19, 2014).

Music on Main also maintains a number of active social media profiles. These reflect their goal of building community and fostering communication with their audience members. The focus of their posts is less publicity-driven than seen with other companies, allowing them to more easily create these kinds of connections.

1. Facebook: the Music on Main Facebook page has many posts each week. Many of these posts provide links to writing about the company or information about upcoming events. Music on Main also provides links to other events it thinks its audience might find useful as a way of building connections within the artistic community. Their page is liked by 912 people (as of May 26, 2015), making its reach relatively important for the company, although there is still room to grow.
2. Twitter: Music on Main is also active on Twitter, with multiple daily posts about their process and upcoming events. Links to documentation of previous productions are also available here. Their twitter feed also features many comments by audience members responding to events, which are often retweeted to bring them further into the conversation. This approach to audience development seems to be effective, as the feed has 1,232 followers (as of May 26, 2015), and many of them are quite active on the site.
3. Instagram: Music on Main’s Instagram feed is focused on giving audiences a deeper understanding of the company’s activities. While YouTube and Facebook emphasise the finished product, the company’s Instagram feed

contains images of sound checks, rehearsals and other behind-the-scenes elements. This allows audience members to gain additional insight into Music on Main's production process, emphasising the importance of the community to the company's work.

4. YouTube: Music on Main produces videos that showcase its past musical events. Many of these videos contain shots of audiences and venues as well, once again reinforcing the community aspect of their audience preparation materials. Music on Main's videos are released after the performance and serve to document events and create continuity among performance events.

Music on Main provides significantly less contextual information before the shows than either of the other companies studied here. This suggests that the non-narrative nature of most of their performances informs this approach. However, in 2014, Music on Main produced an adaptation of the classic Orpheus story at the Cultch. The information provided on the company's website concerns both the history of the Orpheus myth and information about the formal design of the setting, but little about the content of the production itself. The focus on community building and the overall goals of the company take precedence even in the case of narrative-driven performances at Music on Main.

6.3.3 Location-based Priming

The creation of the desired audience experience and venue atmosphere is the focus of significant effort for Music on Main performances and is the reason that it has been included as one of the case studies in this analysis. The informal community-based approach to both publicity and social media is continued in their philosophy of creating performance spaces. Music on Main uses three primary tools for accomplishing the creation of their audience space: informal social atmosphere, spatial design, and concert programs.

Upon entering a Music on Main performance space, audience members are greeted by a volunteer who welcomes them. "Sometimes the first few people into a hall are uncomfortable because it's kind of empty and they're not sure what to do.... We welcome them when they come in. We say hi. We actually say "welcome." We let them know what the drill is." The greeters try to engage people in conversation and make

them feel at home. Their goal is to remind audiences of the social nature of the performance gathering and encourage them to engage in conversation so that they feel more relaxed. Both employees and volunteers pay special attention to people who are attending the performance alone, sometimes even going so far as to try to connect audience members directly with other solo attendees: “we can sit people together (if we know them)... So that people might go alone to The Cellar, but they don’t have to leave alone” (Pay interview). The goal of this approach is to make everyone feel at home – as if the concert were simply a small social gathering taking place in someone’s living room.

Pay identifies alcohol sales as an important technique for preparing audiences for the more informal experience. “I think that alcohol is part of our social fabric. It’s a social lubricant.... we always encourage people to have a drink when they come” (Pay interview). Not only do the drinks encourage social interaction, but they also encourage audience members to show up early to talk to others before the show (Pay interview). The importance of alcohol as a “social lubricant” is emphasised in other materials about the company (Lederman, 2014), and has become one of the defining features of Music on Main’s performances.

The pre-show speech also encourages people to stay after the show and meet each other, further reinforcing the casual social atmosphere of the event. “Sometimes in the curtain speech, I’ll encourage people to stay afterward to meet the musicians and each other” (Pay interview). The behavioral cues experienced by audiences are all intended to emphasise the social aspect of the performance setting. Audiences are greeted at the door, alcohol is made available in order to relax people and they are actively encouraged to engage with each other and the performers. These elements combine to create a performance atmosphere that encourages informal social interactions.

Music on Main’s use of spatial design also reinforces this casual approach to spectatorship. Usually, Music on Main performances take place at Heritage Hall or The Cellar jazz club. The lobby space and performance space are combined, creating an informal atmosphere that carries over into the performance itself. Saturated coloured lights and a pop-oriented playlist provide context for the event, while the stage with

instruments is immediately visible for audience members. By giving audiences access to the entire space, Music on Main tries to show that they are simply inviting audience members to attend an informal gathering, downplaying the sometimes intimidating and formal atmosphere that is sometimes prevalent at concerts and theatre productions (Pay interview). The design of the space helps reinforce the social informality of the desired audience experience at Music on Main events.

The programs for the performances are written to provide an informal introduction to the musicians and the music. “When you get a program you expect to read a biography about the performer.... What we do is we give out the Proust questionnaire, which is about 20 questions. What’s your favourite book, author, colour, flower, hero?” (Pay interview). Seeing the performer’s responses to the Proust questionnaire allows the audiences to get to know them as people (Pay interview). When coupled with Pay’s pre-show announcement encouraging audience members to meet the performers, the social barriers between performers and audience members begin to get broken down.

The creation of informal non-threatening spaces for the consumption of artistic performance has been successful for Music on Main. Their audience preparation strategies focus on the presentation of artistically complex performances in an accessible and informal atmosphere. Audiences do not get information beforehand about the performances other than the names of pieces and performers. They are simply invited to an informal artistic gathering and presented with the performances. Music on Main counts on the creation of a fun informal atmosphere to draw in audience members and create a sense of community around the company.

6.4 Framing Practises in Stage Performance

The three cases presented here illustrate a range of framing practices common in the presentation of theatrical and other artistic performances. While not a comprehensive exploration of local theatre companies, these cases illustrate framing strategies used by three distinct companies. The explorations of the framing strategies used by Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival

provide additional insight into framing practices used in the presentation of stage theatre and allow us to analyse and identify the strengths and potential areas of improvement for the creation of contexts for theatrical audiences. Together with the distinct approach of Music on Main, we are also able to start assembling broader sets of strategies used in different forms of artistic presentation, allowing us to start assembling more coherent frameworks for the presentation of live online performances.

The data that we are able to gather from these case studies provide real-world examples of the framing strategies outlined in Chapter 5. The approaches used by Touchstone Theatre, the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival and Music on Main illustrate the two strategic elements of framing derived from that research. Evaluated in terms of semantic priming and contextual framing, these case studies provide strategic insights into stage theatre framing.

All three companies studied identified major shifts in the ways that they can contact and prepare audiences. The costs associated with physical advertising are increasing while its perceived effectiveness is decreasing (Dunn interview). Online contact is also becoming much more important and companies are experimenting with approaches to social media for community building activities. Critical reviews, while still part of the artistic landscape, are unpredictable as to their ability to attract audiences and community members to these events.

The pressures driving theatre companies' current advertising practices are complex. Cost pressures have caused many companies to move away from taking out advertising in newspapers (Dunn interview) and even limiting their use of printed posters to promote events (Pay interview). Smaller format printed material such as postcards are now commonly used to spread the word of theatrical and musical events. The costs of printed material reinforce the importance of companies' web presence, and the three companies studied here primarily use their printed promotional material to direct audiences to their websites.

Within theatre companies' websites, little space is accorded to individual productions, which focus on company branding. Normally, as is the case with Touchstone Theatre, upcoming productions are highlighted on the website's front page.

However, most of the website's content has to do with the company's artistic and community activities, information about their history and ways in which people can be involved with the company. While the Push Festival also has a page for each production in the festival, their website design is also focused on the overall identity and mandate of the company. The descriptive text for each show usually consists of between one and three paragraphs about the performance itself and biographical information about some of its creative team. While there is some variability in the amount of narrative content presented to audiences in the framing materials, the focus for all three companies is on the tone of the work and the audience's emotional experience of the performance. This suggests that the focus on genre, theme and tone instead of specific elements of plot or characterization has become a widespread convention for theatrical framing. The writing targets the audience's emotional experience of the production directly, letting them know in general ways about the kind of experience they can expect to have.

The position of each production's page within the theatre company's larger website affects the ways in which this message is conveyed. Because it needs to fit the broader design parameters of the theatre company, the visual design of the page is generally not customized for the specific show. Often, the only visual identifier for a performance is the promotional picture used on posters and perhaps a small number of pictures of the show (if it has been previously produced). As a result, the framing for the individual show takes a back seat to the company's branding, with messaging and visual design often more focused on maintaining a connection to the company's mandate than on framing the performance for audiences.

The role of critical reviews is also shifting rapidly as theatre audiences begin to make their artistic choices based on online rather than print information. Blogs are becoming increasingly important as newspapers reduce their local arts coverage. Companies have had to change the focus of their media outreach, providing media tickets to online writers rather than major news outlets which are less likely to print a story about local theatre production. These online reviews have a wide range of approaches, from the informal impression-driven reviews found on vancitybuzz.com to the more formal critical reviews on vancouverplays.com. Artistic mainstay The Georgia Straight falls somewhere between these two poles, with the style of their reviews highly

dependent on the individual reviewer who reports on a production. This multiplicity of voices typical of online communication creates opportunities for audience members to gather information specific to their preferred approach, but makes it much more difficult for theatre companies to craft a coherent audience priming strategy which controls the information available to audiences before the show begins.

Overall, theatrical approaches to audience priming seem rooted in convention. They emphasise artistic vision and emotional audience experience over revelations of specific content, preferring, as Touchstone Theatre does, to leave the discovery of characters and plot for the actual performance itself. Audiences' sense of surprise and discovery are seen as important in this context, discouraging companies from providing additional content priming to audiences. Advertising which focuses on using a single image and simple text to direct potential audience members to a company's website reinforces this idea. Before arriving at the theatre, audiences typically know the genre and themes of the work, without having a significant amount of additional detail. In short, audiences are being prepared to experience a "theatrical" experience, promoting a particular kind of open-minded attentiveness to reinforce the artistic experience of spectatorship.

6.4.1 Semantic Priming

Semantic priming approaches to theatrical framing focus on the range of information available to audiences before they attend a performance. The function of semantic priming for theatrical mediations is to impact the audience's responses to a production by providing them with information. The information provided to audiences changes the relative accessibility of specific concepts and ideas, thus shaping their reactions. Because semantic priming has to occur before the event, advertising and publicity are the most common ways of conveying this information to audiences. Publicity strategies and media are currently changing rapidly for stage theatre companies, resulting in new approaches to audience priming strategy. Semantic priming can be divided into two categories: content priming, where narrative information is provided before the production, and thematic priming, where the information is drawn from non-narrative elements of the production.

The information that Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival give to their audiences is primarily thematic rather than content-driven. Plot summaries tend to be brief and focus on genre and theme rather than character and narrative events. The presentation of narrative elements tends to follow the pattern observed by Bouissac of presenting information with a significant piece missing in order to create suspense for the audience (1987). Biographical information about artists (directors, designers and actors) are common, setting aesthetic and stylistic expectations. The convention of limiting the amount of content priming presented to audiences is widespread in stage theatre.

6.4.1.1 Content priming

Touchstone, PuSh and Music on Main all see content priming as being much less important than thematic priming elements. The amount of narrative information they are willing to present is limited. Decisions about what narrative information to include are made primarily on the basis of the company's branding and mission statement. By focusing the kinds of content priming that they make available, each of the companies studied tries to create a coherent experience for their audiences.

Touchstone Theatre's approach to content priming is derived from their company's mandate to produce contemporary Canadian plays. In her interview Dunn said that the company explicitly provides as little narrative information as possible in their promotional materials. The company's goal is to make sure that people's first interaction with the story is when they see it presented on stage (Dunn interview). As a result, Touchstone Theatre only makes minimal use of content priming for its audiences. What information they provide is based on description of the characters and dramatic situation, avoiding any but the most cursory reference to events that occur during the play.

The PuSh Festival uses show descriptions based on artists' writing and prior reviews or reactions to the performance. Many of the shows they present do include some information about the narrative events in the performance. Generally, narrative information is limited to descriptions of the dramatic situation and events that occur in the first part of the performance; the events of the latter parts of the plays are usually not revealed.

Music on Main provides almost no content priming to their audiences. Only the names of the works to be performed are available on their website and promotional materials. Even when the company produces narrative content, no narrative information is included in their promotional materials.

For all three of the companies studied here, content priming is kept to a minimum. The revealed narrative information is chosen based on the mandate and branding of the company. Company branding is seen in stage theatre as being more important to promotional strategies than the narrative specifics of a production. As a result, little content priming is used in the presentation of stage theatre performances.

6.4.1.2 Thematic priming

Thematic priming practices are much more common among the three companies studied here. Information about genre, themes and the creative team are regularly part of the promotional materials produced by Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival. Music on Main provides information about the creators and includes cues as to genre and musical style in their promotional materials. The branding efforts of all three companies is based around the kind of audience experience that they provide, and this branding is an essential component of their thematic audience preparation.

Touchstone Theatre's mandate focuses on the production of new Canadian plays. Their promotional material reflects this in a number of ways. Their visual design presents the playwright's name more prominently than those of other creators. The written material they provide about the production only includes the biography of the author. When information about genre or theme is provided, these are always described in terms of their relationship with the written script. The playwright-centric model of promotion used by Touchstone intentionally limits the amount of narrative information that they present to audiences. Thematic priming elements become even more important and are heavily emphasised as a result.

The PuSh Festival puts its promotional focus entirely on company branding and the overall curatorial vision of that year's festival. The innovative and experimental aspects of the shows they present are highlighted. As a result, audiences are primed to

expect a certain kind of audience experience regardless of the show that they go see. This form of thematic priming is the most important function of the PuSh Festival's promotional activities (Gibbs interview).

For both of the theatre companies studied here, thematic priming related to branding was the most important form of audience preparation. Part of this emphasis on company branding is caused by the emphasis put on company differentiation by the Canada Council for the Arts (Dunn interview). But the creation of a consistent aesthetic identity allows theatre companies to be focused in the publicity strategies they use to attract audiences.

Additional insight into the relative importance of thematic over content priming is found in Dunn's interview. Touchstone Theatre makes a more conscious decision than most theatre companies to avoid revealing narrative details (Dunn interview). But the tendency to avoid giving away too much about a work of theatre is common across the theatrical spectrum. When you compare stage theatre to filmed narrative and video game promotion, the difference in the level of narrative detail provided is evident. As Dunn also pointed out, a few forms of stage theatre (opera and Shakespeare specifically) do provide much more extensive narrative information to their audiences. Dunn suggests that this occurs because these forms of theatrical expression try to focus audiences on performative rather than narrative elements of the theatrical experience. Howard (2008) echoes this view, suggesting that there is a distinct audience context for performances seen as primarily virtuosic. The artistry in these cases is focused on the interpretation of a well-known work rather than on the surprise of narrative discovery.

While the specifics of these two approaches to content priming are diametrically opposed in their use of narrative detail, their underlying philosophies are in alignment. In both cases, the artistic organizations provide audiences with information that is seen as being relatively unimportant in the context of the production. By doing this, they hope that audiences will focus more on the areas where the information is missing in order to fill their gaps in their knowledge of the production. McConachie's analysis of the cognition of spectatorship (2013) also echoes this division. When writing about spectatorial multitasking and our ability to pay attention to different stage-based stimuli,

he uses Hamlet as an example. On the other hand, his discussion of emotional engagement through plot exposition focuses on a performance where audiences do not know the plot beforehand. McConachie indicates that the emergence of the narrative is the primary reason for spectators' feelings of empathy for the characters on stage (2013). This suggests that, from a cognitive standpoint, the degree of content priming available to audience members may change their dominant cognitive strategy as spectators, leading to greater emotional engagement in cases where there is less content priming.

6.4.2 Contextual framing

Neither Touchstone Theatre nor the PuSh Festival have concrete guidelines for the designs and use of the extra-theatrical spaces for their main stage performances. Certainly, they make use of the architectural conventions that theatrical architecture provides: ticket windows, concessions, lobbies and auditorium seating arrangements. These elements prepare audiences in a general way for the act of spectatorship, but typically do not have direct connections to the specific theatrical presentation on stage. A more careful approach to theatrical framing is evident in the informal staging settings used by Music on Main and the Club PuSh venue used by the PuSh Festival.

In the case of Touchstone Theatre, the limited attention paid to extratheatrical spaces was a specific policy and design choice. Dunn made the decision not to include information about a performance in the lobby or program in order to highlight the importance of the discovery of the text for audiences. By keeping design of extra-theatrical spaces more sparse, Dunn hopes to reinforce the theatre text. As a result, Touchstone Theatre makes use of pre-established audience conventions tied to the behaviour setting of stage theatre, while not adding significantly to its effect for each show.

The PuSh Festival has specific production constraints on their ability to customise extra-theatrical spaces. The festival format makes use of many theatrical venues simultaneously and each show is only presented for a short run (usually less than a week). The costs associated with the customization of each performance space would be prohibitive for the company. Like Touchstone Theatre, PuSh leverages

theatrical behaviour settings without adding specific content or thematic information for each production to the extra-theatrical space.

Both the PuSh Festival and Music on Main hold events in non-conventional theatrical spaces. These venues are much more informal than traditional theatrical venues, involving more informal contact between audience members. In order to encourage this, both companies highlight the importance of alcohol as a means of establishing the right kind of social atmosphere. Audiences for these performances are expected to be much less rigid in following normal theatrical codes, and are much more active in their responses than normal theatrical or musical audiences. These kinds of performance venues are still relatively uncommon, but may represent one potential direction for theatre companies aiming to attract younger audiences less familiar with traditional audience conventions.

The use of an informal behaviour setting allows Club PuSh and Music on Main to frame spectatorship as part of an informal social relationship. The design of the spaces suggests a restaurant or party rather than a formal theatrical venue. The success of these approaches to theatrical framing (in terms of ticket sales at least) suggests that there is significant desire for these more informal performance experiences. Recently, North American movie theatres have likewise started experimenting with different framing techniques for public film spectatorship – Cineplex’s VIP theatres and the Living Room Theater in Portland are notable examples of this trend. Significant additional research would be required to determine what impact these changes in framing strategy have on audience perceptions of the narrative. Audience expectations of the framing of theatrical mediations are clearly shifting, and an awareness of these changes is important for producers of theatrical mediations.

6.5 Researching Theatrical Framing

These three case studies illustrate the ways in which theatre companies prepare audiences for attending performances. For the most part, theatre companies rely on longstanding conventions of theatrical spectatorship and on the behavioural cues provided by theatrical architecture. These mechanisms governing theatrical

spectatorship are well established, and have been discussed in depth in many publications (most notably: Elam, 1980; Esslin, 1987; Rozik, 2008). Primarily, these kinds of cues serve to indicate to audiences that they are experiencing something extraordinary, perhaps triggering a cognitive shift which leads to greater use of cognitive blending and other spectatorial strategies (McConachie, 2013). The elements of theatrical framing controlled by the individual companies are focused on maintaining the company's brand and selling tickets to shows.

Some companies have started experimenting with alternative theatrical architectures. The main thrust of this movement, as illustrated by the PuSh Festival's Club PuSh and the spatial designs of Music on Main has been toward creating more informal experiences for audience members. In part, this is being done to demythologize the artistic event, an attempt to attract audience members who might be intimidated by more formal theatrical or musical productions. The mainstream popularity of both the PuSh Festival and Music on Main seems to indicate that these efforts are successful, although more research would be needed to track the longer term benefits of this shift in the use of theatrical space and convention.

This focus on branding is increasingly important for theatre companies. Not only does it allow them to stay relevant and communicate their individual artistic goals to their audiences. The creation of narrowly defined artistic identities has been further incentivized by a recent emphasis on the part of granting agencies (in particular Canada Council for the Arts) on artistic organizations being distinct from each other in terms of their artistic identities. Coherent branding does allow companies to be more focused in their advertising efforts as well, creating messages to resonate with specific audience segments.

For the most part, advertising and publicity strategy is driven by a desire to sell tickets and maintain brand identity. Those companies that have thought about using information to shape audience members' expectations almost always opt to provide less information in order to create surprise and anticipation in audience members. Direct content priming beyond short descriptions of a play's initial situation, genre or themes is only used in a small number of specifically framed cases. Priming focusing on

audiences' emotional experiences watching the show has emerged as the dominant form of priming used by theatre companies.

The research outlined in this chapter is descriptive, outlining the current practices in theatrical audience preparation. While it does not itself allow for the creation of new framing strategies, it does actively advance research and practice in this area in a number of ways. First, it allows for an increased understanding of not only contemporary framing practices, but also the reasons and strategies underlying companies' promotional decisions. Hopefully, this can increase the profile of audience preparation, allowing theatre companies to be more conscious of their audiences' experiences in the theatre. Second, it highlights the need for more focused research into promotional and behavioural strategies used by artistic productions. A wider survey of theatrical advertising, promotion and spatial design could help bring us closer to understanding audience experience and its relationship to priming and framing strategies. These areas for future research have the potential not only to redefine theories and practices of artistic framing, but also to inform the ways in which we understand the cognition of spectatorship.

For the purposes of this thesis, the information contained here advances our knowledge significantly. These cases allow us to create a model of audience framing that can be compared to the analyses already available for more entertainment-focused theatrical mediations such as film. These models can then be tested against each other in a controlled experimental setting using virtual theatre as the narrative form. This prepares the groundwork for the second phase of research in this thesis and makes the exploration of framing for virtual theatre possible.

Chapter 7. Experimental Framing Conditions

This chapter contains details of the design of the virtual theatre framing experiment presented in Chapter 8 of this thesis. The goal of that experiment is to test existing framing patterns in the context of

virtual theatre. In doing so, I hope to learn more about the way that framing functions in theatrical mediations and be able to better evaluate the effectiveness of potential framing strategies for virtual theatre.

The experiment presented in Chapter 8 tests the differences between artistic, entertainment and experimental approaches to framing. These framing approaches have been established through the functional breakdown of framing effects developed in Chapter 5. The specific strategies associated with each condition are drawn from existing strategies in different forms of theatrical mediation. Specifically, the differences in framing strategy between stage theatre and film outlined in Chapters 5 & 6 of this thesis form the basis for the framing strategies tested here. Participants will experience the controlled framing techniques through customized e-mail communication, web design and virtual waiting spaces in Second Life.

Following the analytical framework developed in this thesis, the experimental framing conditions will address the two functional categories of framing strategies:

1. Semantic priming using information drawn from narrative content and thematic elements.
2. Contextual framing strategies that shape behaviour, drawn from theatrical and paratheatrical cues commonly seen in theatrical mediations.

Chapter Contents

- 7.1 Establishing Framing Conditions
- 7.2 Artistic Framing Condition
- 7.3 Entertainment Framing Condition
- 7.4 Experiment Framing Condition
- 7.5 Framing Conditions Overview

The framing conditions tested in the experiment are directly related to existing framing practices in existing forms of theatrical mediation.

7.1 Establishing Framing Conditions

The existing research into film and theatre framing presented in Chapter 5 and the case studies in stage theatre framing in Chapter 6 were the basis for the framing conditions used in the experimental portion of this thesis. This research shows that there are differences between how mainstream film and theatre are framed. Our understanding of the ways in which film is framed is based primarily on publications in this area, in particular work on filmic paratexts (e.g. Gray, 2010; Marich, 2013) and movie theatre architecture (e.g. Acland, 2003; Singer, 2001). While some theatrical publications, most notably from semiotic analyses of stage theatre (e.g. Esslin, 1991; Rozik, 2003), have established that framing is important, a lack of current literature on current theatrical framing necessitated the case studies in Chapter 6. These approaches to framing led to the creation of three conditions of framing for the experiment, which we called Artistic, Entertainment and Experimental respectively.

Naming the conditions after the social context in which they were presented, rather than the medium the practices were drawn from, is an acknowledgment that neither stage theatre nor film are homogenous. Film can be presented in an artistic way, just as stage theatre has elements of entertainment. As a result, we based our framing conditions on our attempt to create a social context which was oriented primarily toward art or entertainment. In the following sections of this chapter, I lay out the elements of theatrical and cinematic framing which were combined to create the framing conditions used in the experiment.

In order to ensure that the results of the experiment reflect as accurately as possible on real-world practices, the decision was made to use established framing patterns from stage theatre and film. These have the advantage of being relatively consistent over time in both theatre (Esslin, 1991) and film (Gray, 2010). Because of this choice, many contemporary experiments in audience preparation are not represented in these framing conditions. As a result, while the experimental conditions accurately reflect

mainstream framing methods, certain less common framing approaches are not covered here.

The third condition, which we refer to as Experimental, is designed to be our control condition. Participants were given information about the experiment rather than the performance, with the goal of having them be unprepared for the event itself. Participants assigned to this condition received the same kinds of communication as the other two conditions, but in this case the content was designed to avoid framing the performative aspect of their experience at all. This control condition is important to the experimental design, as it allows us to explore how audiences respond in the absence of thematic and content priming, and with a counter-productive social context.

Rationalizing the complex social conditions of real-world framing strategies resulted in an approach that used three methods of delivering priming and contextual information to participants. First, e-mail communication was used to introduce the performance and provide links to additional information. Second, participants were directed to websites designed to mirror design choices typical of different framing approaches. Third, different Second Life waiting areas were selected in order to differentiate participants' pre-show experience.

The application of the three framing conditions is summarized in the figure below. The details of each condition are elaborated in the following sections of this chapter.

Art Condition	Entertainment Condition	Experiment Condition
<p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event described as experimental art - Story as creative and emotional, emphasising theme 	<p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event described as online entertainment - Description focuses on theme, genre and entertainment value 	<p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Event described as thesis experiment - Description of experiment as research project
<p>Web Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single page on the website of an established theatre company 	<p>Web Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website modeled on conventional film websites 	<p>Web Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Single page on the SIAT (SFU) website
<p>Waiting Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second Life waiting area is an existing online art gallery with some information about the show 	<p>Waiting Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second Life waiting area is an extension of the audience area. Performance space is visible. 	<p>Waiting Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Second Life waiting area is an existing lab space created as part of an online university campus.

Figure 14: Experimental Framing Condition Summary

7.2 Artistic Framing Condition

The goal of the artistic framing condition is to use framing conditions derived from artistic theatrical mediations in order to create an artistic cultural context for participants in the study. The specific strategies used for the e-mail communication, website and waiting areas are derived from framing practices in mainstream stage theatre. Stage theatre framing practices are explored in this thesis using writing about theatrical events

and case studies of three Vancouver theatre companies. While contemporary mediated theatre practices extend from virtual reality to gaming, the selection of stage theatre as the model for this condition was purposely chosen to define a reasonable scope for this investigation. As seen in Chapter 6, stage theatre framing strategies have the advantage of being well established and relatively consistent across different types of performative event. Since there is so little research on framing, this seemed like a reasonable starting point to help us generate initial data on the subject.

The case studies of Vancouver stage theatre companies conducted in Chapter 6 of this thesis reveal framing and priming strategies used by stage theatre companies. Evidence from both Touchstone Theatre and The PuSh Festival reveal that stage theatre companies prioritize thematic priming over content priming in their promotional and informational materials. The analysis of the web designs for these theatre companies (see Chapter 6) reveal a design focus on company branding rather than the specifics of each performance. The document analysis and interviews (see Chapter 6) further revealed that, while stage theatre companies take advantage of the artistic behaviour setting of the theatre (as theorized by Goffman, 1974), the spaces were not usually customized for individual performances. Finally, stage theatre framing made consistent use of pre-show announcements to signal the beginning of the theatrical performance itself.

Stage theatre companies make minimal use of content priming in their promotional material (Dunn interview, Gibbs interview). Their goal is to reveal enough content to appeal to audiences while maintaining suspense when it comes to narrative information (Gibbs interview). Touchstone Theatre went even further, strategically minimizing audience access to content priming in order to maintain the purity of their audience experience (Dunn interview). Descriptions of performances focus instead on artistry, genre, theme and tone. By focusing on these elements, theater companies hope to impact the audience's anticipated emotional experience. Often, as in the example of Touchstone Theatre's production of *Late Company* (Touchstone Theatre, 2015), companies emphasize the subtle ways in which the audience will be affected by the performance. Using this kind of language allows theatre companies to focus on the unique artistic nature of their theatrical productions.

The analysis of company websites revealed that stage theatre productions are typically presented on a single page within the company website. Upcoming shows are featured on the front page of the company website, usually with an image and a link connecting people to the page specific to the production. The visual design of the show page is typically the same as the rest of the company's website. The priority of the web design is to maintain the company's branding rather than illustrate elements of the show through design choices. The visual design specific to the show is often limited to one or two promotional images that appear on all printed and online promotional materials. By designing their websites in this way, stage theatre companies use their own company branding as a significant element of audience priming, using it to convey aesthetic and stylistic information about productions. Their focus on company branding also creates an opportunity for the companies to build audiences beyond a single performance, an aspect of promotion that is particularly important for presenting companies such as The PuSh Festival (Gibbs interview).

Esslin (1991), Rozik, (2003) and Goffman (1974) have argued that theatrical settings and architecture are essential elements of framing stage theatre events. Contextual framing guides the audience experience by shaping initial reactions to the event (Esslin, 1991). First, there is the convention of exclusivity, where audience members must present a ticket to gain access to the extra-theatrical spaces (typically a lobby) (Goffman, 1974). Lobbies typically contain additional information about the production and audiences. There, audience members wait for the theatre to open alongside others who have also purchased tickets. The liminality represented by the tickets and the lobby space helps set the event apart from everyday reality and establishes the individuals watching the show as a coherent group: an audience. Second, audiences enter the theatre, where the conventions of spectatorship are further reinforced. The auditorium space is filled with a number of identical seats all facing the stage. This establishes the stage space as the source of narrative information and identifies it as the focal point for audience attention. Together, the paratheatrical and theatrical spaces provide architectural and social cues to audiences that trigger cognitive models (such as conceptual blending) that audiences use to fully understand theatrical narrative (McConachie, 2008).

All three companies studied in Chapter 6 made use of pre-show announcements before each performance. These announcements follow similar scripts, thanking sponsors and encouraging audiences to turn off cell phones and pay attention to the performance. A perceived weakening of the behavioral conventions of theatre spectatorship means that such behavioral instructions are seen as important (Dunn interview). Because of this focus, not only do pre-show announcements serve to indicate the beginning of the theatrical narrative, but they also reinforce the behavioral conventions that contextualize theatrical spectatorship.

The artistic framing condition was created to reflect these findings. The three means of delivering framing content (e-mail, web design & waiting area) were all created based on this model.

7.2.1 E-mail Communication

Each participant in the study received an e-mail informing them about the details of *The Forgotten Sentry* performance. For the artistic condition, this e-mail was sent from the virtualtheatre@gmail.com e-mail address. The e-mail text follows:

Hi,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this exciting exploration of this new form of artistic expression. While live online theatre isn't new (the first performance took place in 1994), communication and distribution tools are now making it possible for this art form to reach much wider audience. We hope that you enjoy this experience and look forward to hearing what you thought after the show.

The Forgotten Sentry is an exploration of the personal experiences of a soldier who is manning a military outpost protecting a city from a deadly epidemic. He has been isolated for months, and is starting to feel the strain of his situation. The challenges he faces provide the backdrop for this performance.

This online theatre performance has been produced by digital artist Dan Coyote (<http://www.dancoyote.com/>), and is the latest in a series of performances that he has staged using Second Life. Dan Coyote's work has been featured in digital art festivals and at galleries and art spaces around the world. It is our pleasure to bring this work to you as part of our attempt to build wider audiences and understand how people react to online theatre events.

In order to watch this performance, you will have to install the Second Life client from secondlife.com. If you don't already have an account, you will need to create one of those as well. We strongly suggest that you go into Second Life before the performance itself to familiarize yourself with the interface and experiment a little in the virtual world. A little familiarity with the system will make your experience much richer.

Your ticket number is *. It is valid for the performance on December * at * PM, Pacific time. Once you have one, please let us know what your Second Life ID is so that we can associate it with your ticket number.

To find out more about the performance and our artists, please visit <http://pitheatre.com/the-forgotten-sentry/>. If you have any questions, you can contact us at virtualtheatre@gmail.com.

See you at the show!

Ben Unterman

Producer, *The Forgotten Sentry*

The e-mail to the art condition participants refers to theatre as an emerging art form, and focuses audience attention on the personal emotional journey of the protagonist. Other than identifying the protagonist and the challenges that will be faced, there is no content priming provided by this e-mail. This lack of content priming is in line with Touchstone Theatre's summary of *Late Company* (see Figure 4) as well as the PuSH Festival's writing about their performances (as seen in Chapter 6 with the example of *7 Important Things*). As with these examples, the information about *The Forgotten Sentry* emphasises emotional and thematic elements of the play. This focuses the

framing strategy on thematic rather than content priming, a defining feature of stage theatre priming strategies.

The e-mail also emphasises the director of the performance, Dan Coyote, providing a brief biography that emphasizes his artistic accomplishments. The analysis of the Touchstone Theatre's website (2015) and the PuSh Festival website (2015) in Chapter 6 reveals an emphasis on the biographies of the primary creators of the works. By including the primary creator's biographical information, this element of the message is designed to further reinforce the artistic social context of the event.

The rest of the information in the e-mail is instrumental, reminding participants to download the Second Life client, signalling the time of the performance they will attend and providing a web link to the web space designed for the artistic condition.

Taking its content cues from Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival, this e-mail uses thematic priming and contextual artistic information to begin establishing an artistic context for the performance of *The Forgotten Sentry*.

7.2.2 Website Design

The e-mail for the artistic framing condition refers participants to a web page for *The Forgotten Sentry* on the Pi Theatre website. By associating the performance with an existing artistic organization, the web page took advantage of the artistic credibility of an artistic organization. By representing the show with a single web page on a larger site, the design of this element of the framing process echoes the web design priorities of Touchstone Theatre, the PuSh Festival and Music on Main, as seen in Chapter 6.

All three of the companies studied in Chapter 6 presented individual performances on single web pages within their company websites. In the case of Touchstone Theatre's Late Company (see Figure 4) and Music on Main's Music for the Winter Solstice (see Figure 11), the page for the performances were designed very simply. The show pages contained a single image to represent the performance and a description of the event that prioritized emotional and thematic priming over content priming. In addition, the page for Late Company (see Figure 4) contained a bio of the

playwright. The analysis of the PuSh Festival's website also featured individual pages for each performance in the festival, with summaries (for example the summary of 7 Important Things analysed in section 6.2.1). Like the examples from Touchstone Theatre and Music on Main, the page for 7 Important Things focused on thematic priming, while avoiding content priming as much as possible. In all three of these cases, the design elements of the show pages matched that of the company's website as a whole, rather than being visually distinct for each production. Because of the web design strategies of these three companies, the design of the page for *The Forgotten Sentry* follows all of the internal design convention of the website on which it appears. As with Touchstone Theatre (see Figure 4) and Music on Main (see Figure 11), the header and navigation links for the company remain at the top of the page. A screen shot of the Pi Theatre website is used with permission of the company and can be seen here in Figure 15.

The text on the web page also follow writing patterns typical of Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival. The text for *The Forgotten Sentry* (see Figure 15) does include a small amount of content priming, but focuses primarily on thematic priming. It is important to this summary that the content priming provided (in this case information about the soldier and the quarantine) is all information about what happens before the beginning of the performance itself. Thematic priming elements include detailed descriptions of the soldier's emotional state and indications of the dilemmas that he faces. Contextual thematic elements regarding the other activities of director DC Spensley also contribute to establishing an artistic social context for participants viewing this web page.

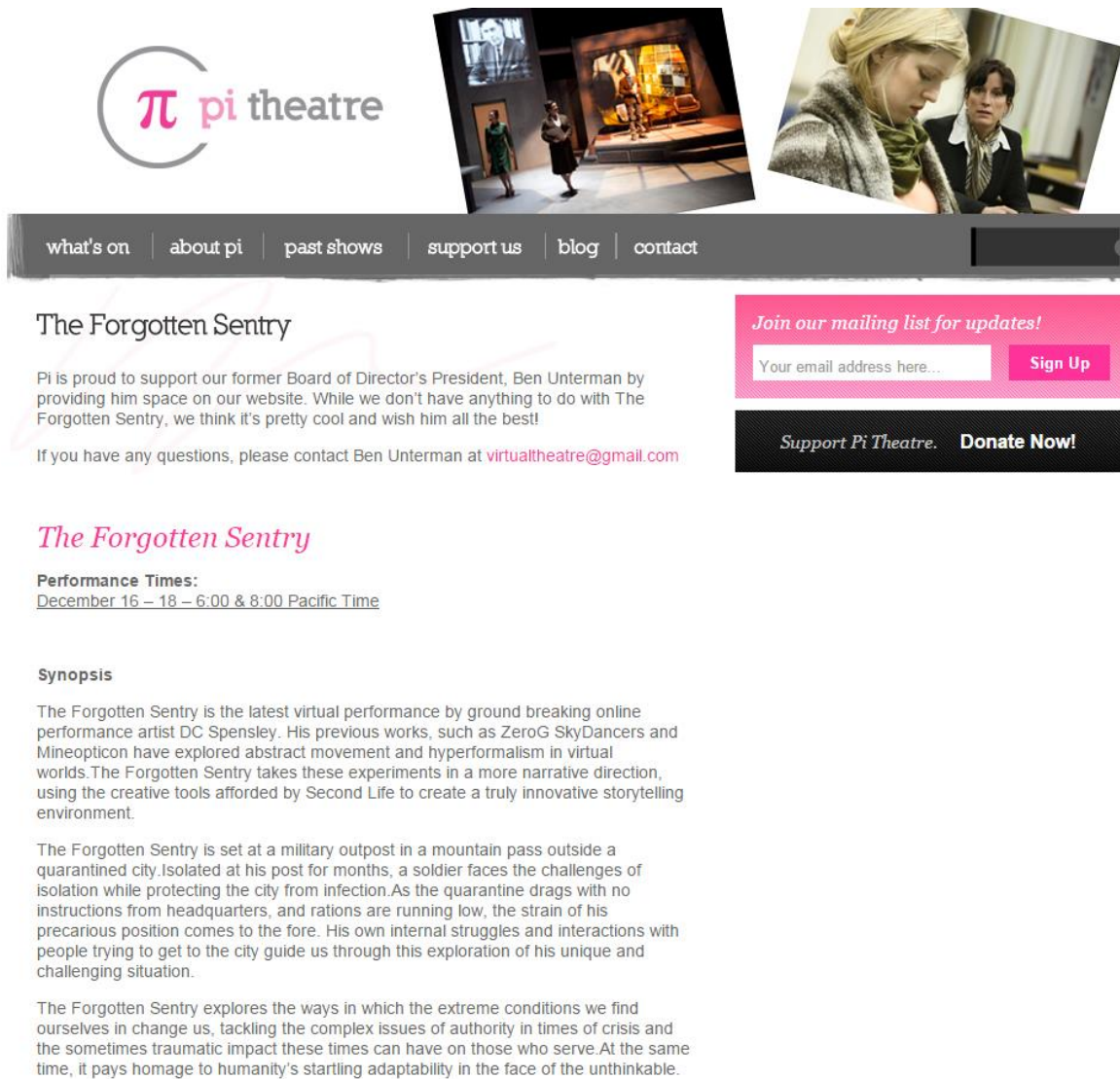


Figure 15: Art condition web page at Pi Theatre

Below the text on the web site, a single image from the production, showing the soldier asleep at his desk, was visible to audiences. This follows the web design patterns of both Touchstone Theatre and Music on Main (as referenced in Chapter 6 and above), which included a single image on the web pages for their productions. Because there were no published reviews of *The Forgotten Sentry*, we were unable to include links to reviews, an element that both Dunn (Touchstone Theatre) and Gibbs (PuSh Festival) consider to be important for web design.

The artistic condition website for *The Forgotten Sentry* makes use of textual and design strategies drawn from the case studies of stage theatre companies reported on in Chapter 6. Like these theatre companies, the production was promoted using a single web page on the website of an artistic organization, maintaining the look and feel of the website as a whole. The textual description of the production uses thematic priming strategies that were typical of these productions, focusing on emotional rather than factual content for describing the production. Finally, the work was represented by a single visual image intended to represent the performance as a whole. The end result was to reinforce the artistic contextual framing that was started in the e-mail communication.

7.2.3 Second Life Waiting Area

Theories of theatrical architecture describe lobby spaces as liminal spaces that allow audiences to gradually become more receptive to the performance they are about to see (Rozik, 2008, Goffman, 1974). This period of transition is seen as important for theatrical reception (Rozik, 2008) and as an important element of the rituals of theatrical spectatorship (Schechner, 2003). While Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival do not personalize their lobbies, the ways in which they use the liminal space have some elements in common. These elements are reflected in the design of the Second Life waiting area for *The Forgotten Sentry*.

On a functional level, we tried to make the waiting area have the same functional features as a theatre lobby. Only participants who had tickets for the performance were given the address to the virtual space, mirroring the ticketing requirement of most theatre lobby spaces (as described by Schechner, 2003). Schechner describes the decoration of theatre lobbies as being imbued with the symbols of high class and high culture (2003). This is borne out with the case studies as well; of the venues used by the PuSh Festival (PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, 2015, Venues), roughly 60% (13 of 21 venues) display paintings and other visual art in their lobbies. The theatre for Touchstone's Late Company is The Cultch (Touchstone Theatre, 2015), which has an art gallery with works for sale as its lobby. For our art condition waiting area, we chose a Second Life art gallery that was displaying the digital sculptures of the show's director,

DC Spensley. This waiting area should provide a digital equivalent of the visual art-filled lobbies and was intended to create an artistic context for the participants' experience to follow.

All three stages of the "artistic" framing condition are specifically designed to create conditions in which participants would feel like they are participating as an audience member at an artistic event. To this end, framing strategies were adapted from those used by Touchstone Theatre, The PuSh Festival, and Music on Main as part of the case studies described in Chapter 6. Priming focused on thematic priming over content priming in order to give audiences a sense of the emotional journey they would experience without providing them with too much narrative information. Contextual framing focused on the identification of the artists and providing participants with a waiting area with many artistic cues.

*

7.3 Entertainment Framing Condition

The entertainment framing condition makes use of framing convention from those theatrical mediations which focus on their entertainment value. Among theatrical mediations, the framing strategies of film are the most thoroughly documented in the literature. As a result, we will be using commercial film promotion and screening as the source of our framing strategies and design choices in the entertainment framing condition.

Framing strategies for commercial film emphasise their value as entertainment (Gray, 2010). Semantic priming in film promotion contains much more content priming than stage theatre, although there is still significant thematic priming in play. Web design reinforces this use of content priming, with extensive visual and written documentation of films being presented to audiences (Gray, 2010). The design of movie theatres themselves reinforce the idea of entertainment and public consumerism (Acland, 2003), further reinforcing the social role that film production and spectatorship play.

Films rely primarily on trailers rather than textual description to sell their film to audiences. Trailers are often the first exposure that audiences have to cinematic narratives (Gray, 2010). Film trailers are designed and edited by marketing teams rather than the creative team behind the film and tend to emphasise the most exciting parts of the film as well as those sections which best reinforce the specific genre represented by that production (Gray, 2010). Hedling identifies the key elements of trailer design as the book (narrative), the look (stylistic design) and the hook (drawing people to the film), stating that these work together to shape critical and audience discussions of the film (2006). Trailers are focused on creating excitement (leading to ticket purchases) based primarily on two approaches: reinforcing genre conventions to make the film more easily understandable, and presenting elements of the film experience that tend to be more archetypal and universal (Gray, 2010). Rather than describing spectators' emotional experience, trailers focus on the reward and gratification that seeing the film will bring to mainstream film viewers.

Content priming is much more present in film promotion than it is for stage theatre. The construction of trailers themselves reveals content information, as they are edited together using footage from the film itself. Determining the proper level of narrative information to include in trailers is challenging; trailers must communicate the story of the film while at the same time holding back key information (Jensen, 2014). Kernan's analysis of American film trailers identifies a shift in the language of film trailers, leading to an increase in the amount of narrative content contained in trailers after the 1940s (2004). In addition, trailers themselves are a narrative construct (Jensen, 2014) and function as a paratext associated with the film they are promoting (Gray, 2010). The strategic marketing decision about the extent of content priming varies from film to film and is often genre specific (Gray, 2010). However, the use of content priming alongside thematic priming is much more common in mainstream film than stage theatre promotion.

Website design for film promotion follows similar patterns of revealing content and thematic information. Film websites tend to be very visual, providing images, trailers and background information about the production across many pages. Most major film releases have their own websites, with separate pages for trailers, textual descriptions,

photos of the film and release information. Many of the trailers, descriptions and photos focus on star power and name recognition, putting the work into the broader context of the artists' work (Gray, 2010). Interactive elements of these websites are limited, usually taking on an archival function which allows users to access information rather than being narrative in scope.

Occasionally, film promoters will create paratextual experiences which reinforce the film's premise. These websites are created as if they existed in the fictional world of the film. *The Blair Witch Project* had a promotional website which presented the premise of the film as a documentary (Gray, 2010). More recently, a website for *Jurassic World* (Universal Studios, 2015) was designed to look like the website of the titular dinosaur theme park. In the case of *Jurassic World*, the film also had a more traditional promotional website (Universal Studios, 2015). User interaction with these paratextual websites is much more involved, as they are intended to immerse audience members in the fictional world of the film (Gray, 2010). This approach to online promotion is still very unusual, and does not represent mainstream film website design (Gray, 2010).

Movie theatres frame the audience experience as one of entertainment and public consumerism. Movie theatres themselves have undergone a significant transformation since the 1990s, in particular with the birth of the megaplex (Acland, 2003). These new movie theatres contain a wide variety of entertainments, using Hollywood movies to bring the experience together under a common theme (Acland, 2003). The lobby spaces are intended to be entertaining in their own right, with arcade games, screens showing trailers, a variety of food offerings and posters for current and upcoming films all competing for your attention. Both the lobby spaces and theatres are designed to provide a sense of entertainment, and are tightly controlled to construct a world specific to film spectatorship. Because there are so many films playing, the lobbies are not designed to prepare audiences for one film experience but focus instead on the entertainment experience as a whole (Acland, 2003). These spaces aim to create the optimal conditions for spectatorship by focusing on the entertainment value of the films shown there. The difference in tools and approaches indicates an interesting gap between artistic / theatrical spaces and entertainment / cinematic ones.

As with the artistic framing condition, the goal of the entertainment condition is to provide participants with cues that lead them to interpret the experience of *The Forgotten Sentry* as entertainment. The studies of cinematic framing cited above identify several areas in which the promotion of mainstream film as entertainment differs from that of the examples of stage theatre studied for this thesis. First, the language used to describe the events focuses on excitement and star power (Gray, 2010). Second, there is a greater willingness to include narrative content in promotional materials, especially in films released since the 1940s (Kernan, 2004). Third, web design varies greatly from the stage theatre production, with each film having its own website for promotional purposes (Gray, 2010). Finally, the design of the waiting areas and spectatorial spaces aims to create a sense of entertainment rather than exclusivity (Acland, 2003). These observations of cinematic framing form the basis for the e-mail, web design and waiting area strategies prepared for participants in the entertainment condition.

7.3.1 E-mail Communication

The first point of contact with participants assigned to the entertainment condition was an introductory e-mail. An e-mail address customized for the show (theforgottensentry@gmail.com) was used to communicate with participants. The language in the introductory e-mail made use of priming and linguistic strategies drawn from mainstream film promotion. The text of the introductory e-mail read as follows:

Subject: Online performance: The Forgotten Sentry

Thank you for joining us for this important milestone in digital entertainment. This event will take advantage of advances in online communication to bring a new and exciting storytelling style to a wider audience.

The Forgotten Sentry is a post-apocalyptic drama set in a near future where the world has been ravaged by a deadly epidemic. An outpost high in the mountains is the last line of defense against those who are trying to break the quarantine and enter the city. The soldier protecting the city is running low on supplies and hasn't heard from headquarters in months. Pushed to the limit, he must find ways to retain his humanity despite the brutality of his situation.

In order to participate in this event, you will have to install the Second Life client from secondlife.com. If you don't already have an account, you will need to create one of those as well. We strongly suggest that you go into Second Life the day before the event itself to familiarize yourself with the interface and experiment a little in the virtual world. A little familiarity with the system will make your experience much richer.

Your ticket number is 16B2002. It is valid for the performance at 8:00 Pacific time on December 16. Please let us know what your Second Life ID is so that we can associate it with your ticket number.

To find out more, please visit <http://theforgottensentry.com/>. If you have any questions, you can get in touch with us at theforgottensentry@gmail.com.

See you all at the show,

Ben

For participants in the entertainment condition, virtual theatre is framed as an innovation in the realm of digital entertainment. Accordingly, the technological rather than expressive features of the form are emphasised to create a sense of excitement. This emphasis recalls early promotion of cinematic film screenings as a technological novelty (Singer, 2001).

The short summary of *The Forgotten Sentry* follows patterns in content and thematic priming identified in the literature. Gray (2010) identifies cinematic genre as an important tool to help audiences decipher films, and identifying *The Forgotten Sentry* as a post-apocalyptic drama provides this kind of thematic priming. The brief description goes further, identifying several tropes from the script that are typical of this genre, providing audiences with content priming to support the initial genre claim. As Jensen (2014) suggests of film trailers, the information about the performance focuses primarily on actions and is presented in a simple narrative structure with an ambiguous ending that leads audiences to want to discover the resolution presented in the performance itself. The tone of this short summary focuses on the kind of hyperbolic discourse that Kernan (2004) identifies as an important element of mainstream film promotion.

Focusing more heavily on content than thematic priming, this description of *The Forgotten Sentry* is much more typical of entertainment-oriented framing strategies, and provides a distinct social context for the performance.

As with the other conditions' e-mails, the remainder of the information in this initial communication with participants concerns the practical details of their participation. They were given instructions to download the Second Life client software and directed to theforgottensentry.com, a website designed specifically to support the entertainment framing condition.

7.3.2 Website Design

For the entertainment condition, a full website was designed (theforgottensentry.com) that mirrored the design choices of official film websites. Like the film websites described by Gray (2010), the website for the entertainment condition is visually oriented, with images, descriptions and practical information distributed across several pages. The information available on the entertainment website is more comprehensive than the other two conditions, because of the position in business writing on film promotion that states that an increase in information about the production will lead to a more positive audience experience (Koku, 1995; Mitchell, 2006).

Content on the website for the entertainment condition was broken into different pages according to the divisions identified by Mitchell (2006) in his analysis of film websites. Individual pages on the website were: Home (title & dates), Synopsis (performance & medium summary), Second Life (practical software information), Gallery (images of the setting and characters) and Contact. The page for trailers identified by Mitchell (2006) as a common feature of film websites was not included since our production did not have a trailer due to production time constraints. As is common with film websites, these pages could be navigated through tabs across the top of the page.

The Synopsis page (see Figure ** below) featured a textual description of *The Forgotten Sentry* very similar to that in the e-mail message to participants. This description provided participants in the entertainment condition with both thematic and content priming with an emphasis on active description of the initial situation of the

protagonist. Below that, a description of “hyperformance” (as I called virtual theatre for this group of participants) described this form as a new form of online entertainment that was being studied to get audience feedback on its effectiveness. Between these descriptions of the content and form of *The Forgotten Sentry*, the text on the Synopsis page aimed to replicate elements of entertainment-focused social contexts.

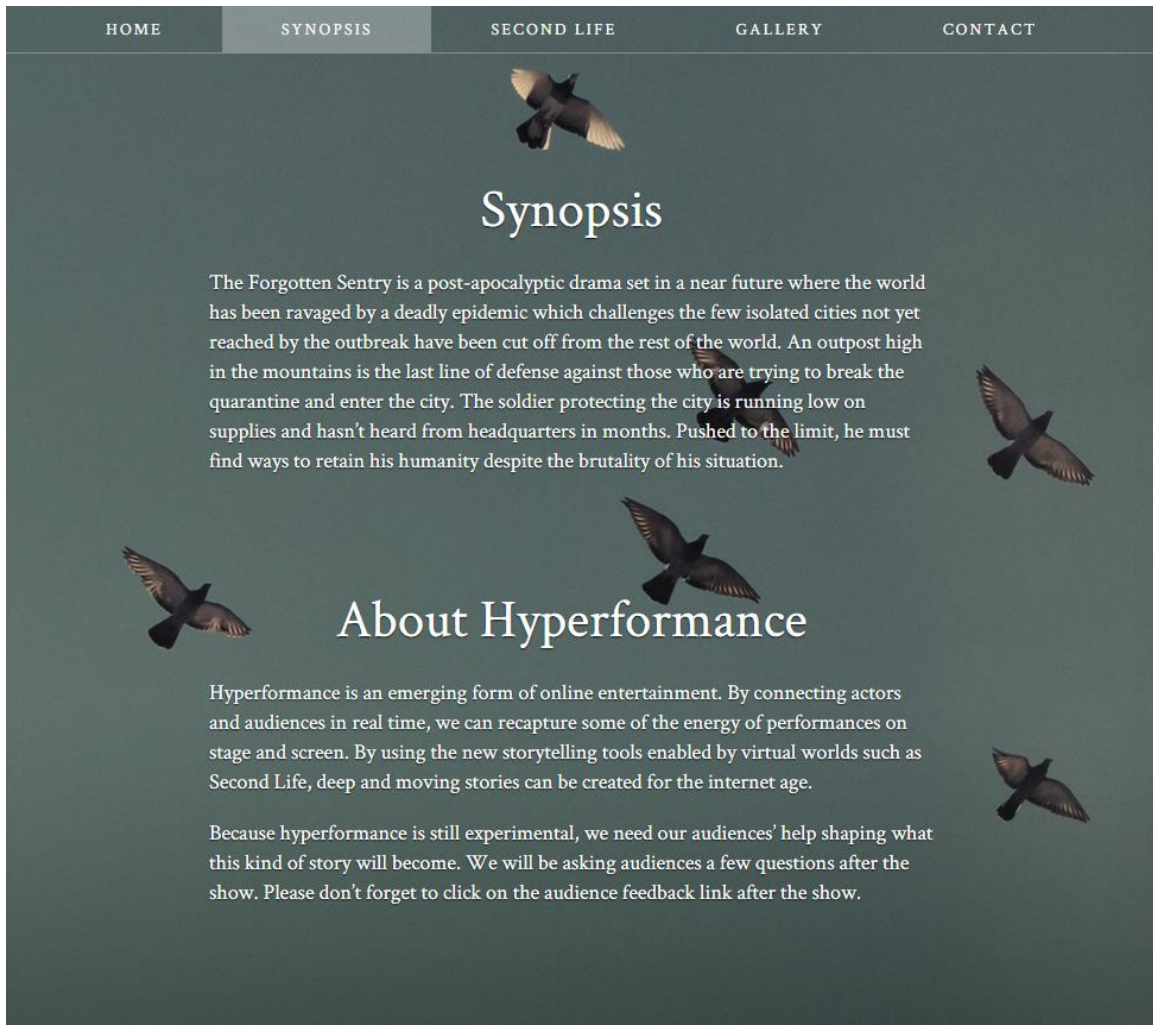


Figure 16: Entertainment condition website (theforgottensentry.com), Synopsis page

The gallery page of theoforgottensentry.com featured still captured from the design and rehearsal process of the performance. These images were selected to represent the protagonist in a variety of situations related to his daily routine: practicing with his rifle, typing reports, guarding the perimeter and resting. The final picture was a

picture of the hut where he worked and lived. The gallery page displayed thumbnail pictures (see Figure ** below) which could be viewed at full resolution by clicking on them. Together, the images from the performance serve as content priming for participants. They represent the “look” of the production, an important element of film audience preparation according to Hedling (2006). The inclusion of multiple images in an online gallery added to the cultural context of entertainment that we were attempting to create for participants in the entertainment condition.

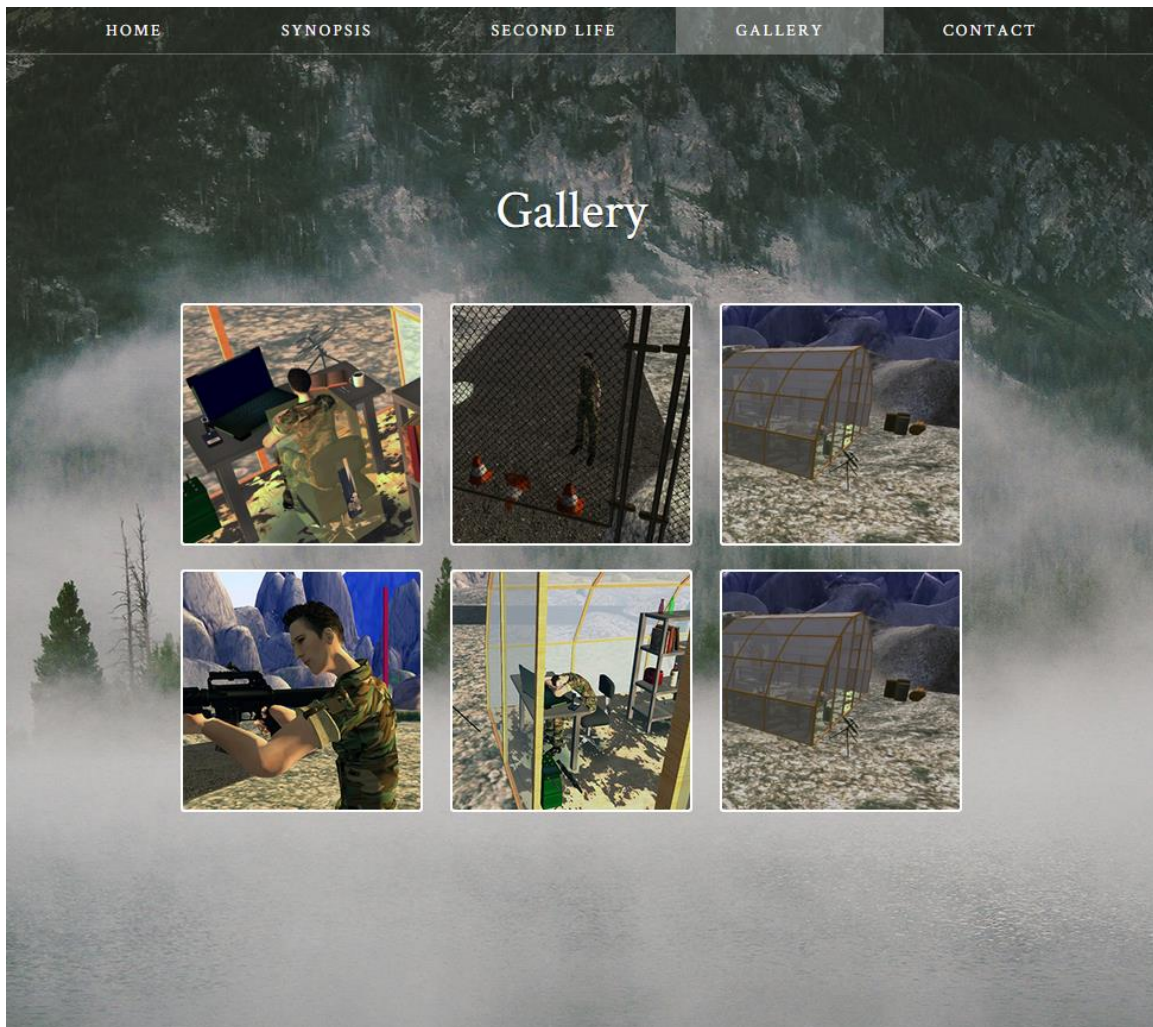


Figure 17: Entertainment condition website (theforgottensentry.com) Gallery page

The overall website design was the work of web designer Tiphonie Lau. The colours, fonts, background images, and design themes aimed to reinforce the physical and social isolation of the protagonist, serving as a form of thematic priming. As such,

the visual and graphic design of the website serve as a form of thematic priming for audiences, complementing the content priming contained in the text and images on the website itself.

Content and thematic priming strategies drawn from commercial film allow the website for the entertainment condition to prepare participants in ways that are typical of theatrical mediations that are promoted as entertainment. By providing a more complete picture of the narrative through textual description and images, this approach is significantly different than the artistic framing conditions. In addition, the design of the website and the hyperbolic nature of the language used to describe the event serve as a contextual frame for audiences that identifies the experience as being connected with entertainment industries.

7.3.3 Second Life Waiting Area

In deciding on the waiting area for the entertainment condition of *The Forgotten Sentry*, we tried to create the online equivalent to going to a movie theatre. Unlike theatre lobbies, most cinema lobbies are not designed for people to stay for extended periods of time (Acland, 2003). Audiences typically get their food in the lobby, then head to the theatre itself, where pre-show content related to the film they will see is being played. Accordingly, rather than having a separate waiting area for the entertainment condition were given early access to the seating area for *The Forgotten Sentry*.

Upon their arrival, an usher checked their tickets and ensured that their Second Life clients were properly configured to experience the performance. Then, audience members were left to find their seats or explore the setting of the show in more detail. Navigation and additional discovery of the performance space was possible for participants in the entertainment condition. By framing the audience experience as casual entertainment, we reinforced the contextual framing already present in the web design and the e-mail communication with participants.

7.4 Experiment Framing Condition

The third framing condition was designed to explore the concept of a type of “control group” in which the messaging was clearly delimited as being outside that of normative theatrical framing practices. The experiment framing condition avoids any framing or priming strategies that might conceivably be used in any real-world approach to framing virtual theatre. First, the materials created for this condition avoided all content and thematic priming, providing audiences with no information about the performance beyond the title of the piece. Second, linguistic and design strategies were used to create a contextual framing environment that was reminiscent of academic research experiences. In this way, we created a coherent social context for participants that would be as ineffective as possible at creating appropriate cognitive conditions for spectatorship. By comparing this condition with those based on established framing practices, differences in the effectiveness of these framing strategies should become apparent.

Linguistic and design cues for this condition were drawn from academic research into online presence and copresence, as well as the standard phrasings suggested by SFU’s Office of Research Ethics. Official university e-mail addresses and websites were used to reinforce the experimental nature of their participation. The Second Life waiting area was an online biology lab that focused on genetic research projects. The overall context created by these different participant contacts was designed to provide participants with no thematic or contextual framing elements related to *The Forgotten Sentry*. While the experiment framing condition was intended to be of limited effectiveness, it is important to acknowledge that it was not devoid of framing per se. Like any social situation (Goffman, 1963; Barker, 1968), academic experiments include their own highly recognizable framing strategies, which may affect participants’ reactions in different ways.

7.4.1 E-mail Communication

The initial e-mail contact with participants in the experiment framing condition was sent from the researcher’s official SFU e-mail address. The language in the e-mail

focused on academic research, detailing the experimental stages that participants would be engaging in. The text of the introductory e-mail follows:

Sent from: bau@sfu.ca

Subject: Online Performance Experiment

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our exploration of online performance techniques. This research is conducted as part of the PhD research of Benjamin Unterman at Simon Fraser University. The study has been granted ethics approval by the Office of Research Ethics of Simon Fraser University.

The study will take place in two parts. First, you will participate in an online performance of *The Forgotten Sentry* by Nena St. Louis, which will be performed in Second Life. Following the performance, we will be asking you to fill out a short questionnaire about your experience. This portion of the study will take approximately 20 minutes. A small number of participants will be interviewed by Skype or telephone in the weeks following the performance to gather more details about your experience. The interview process would take around 30 minutes and is entirely voluntary.

In order to participate in this research, you will need to install the Second Life client from secondlife.com. If you don't already have an account, you will create a Second Life account as well. We strongly suggest that you go into Second Life the day before the event itself to familiarize yourself with the interface and experiment a little in the virtual world. A little familiarity with the system will make your experience much richer.

Your ticket number is: *. It is valid for the performance on December 17, 2014 at 8:00 PM Pacific time. Once you have a Second Life ID, please send it to us so that we can associate it with your ticket number.

More details about the study can be found on its website at <http://www.sfu.ca/siat/about/people/faculty/ben-unterman/LOAS.html>. If you have any questions about the research, feel free to contact Benjamin Unterman at bau@sfu.ca.

Yours truly,

Benjamin Unterman

PhD Candidate

Simon Fraser University

The information about *The Forgotten Sentry* in the e-mail communication for the experiment framing condition is intentionally sparse. Only the title and the name of the author were provided as references. This was done in order to avoid any content or thematic priming save what could be gleaned from the title of the performance itself. Instead of information about the performance, participants were given a description of the experimental process using language drawn from the consent form templates from Simon Fraser University.

The second part of the e-mail contains practical information about their participation. Participants were provided with information about downloading the Second Life client and setting up an account. They were also assigned a ticket number and given the time of the performance. Finally participants were directed to a page on the SFU website that gave them more details about the study.

The framing strategy used in this e-mail communication was designed to minimize the amount that participants knew about the performance they were about to see. There is no content priming and only minimal thematic priming (the title of the piece) available to audiences in this e-mail. Formal experimental language provided an alternative social context which was chosen because it is unsuited to audience preparation.

7.4.2 Website Design

The website for the experiment framing condition was a single page hosted on the Simon Fraser University website. Like the e-mail communication for this condition,

the web page focused on creating an experimental context for the event. A screenshot of the experiment condition web page can be seen in Figure 18.

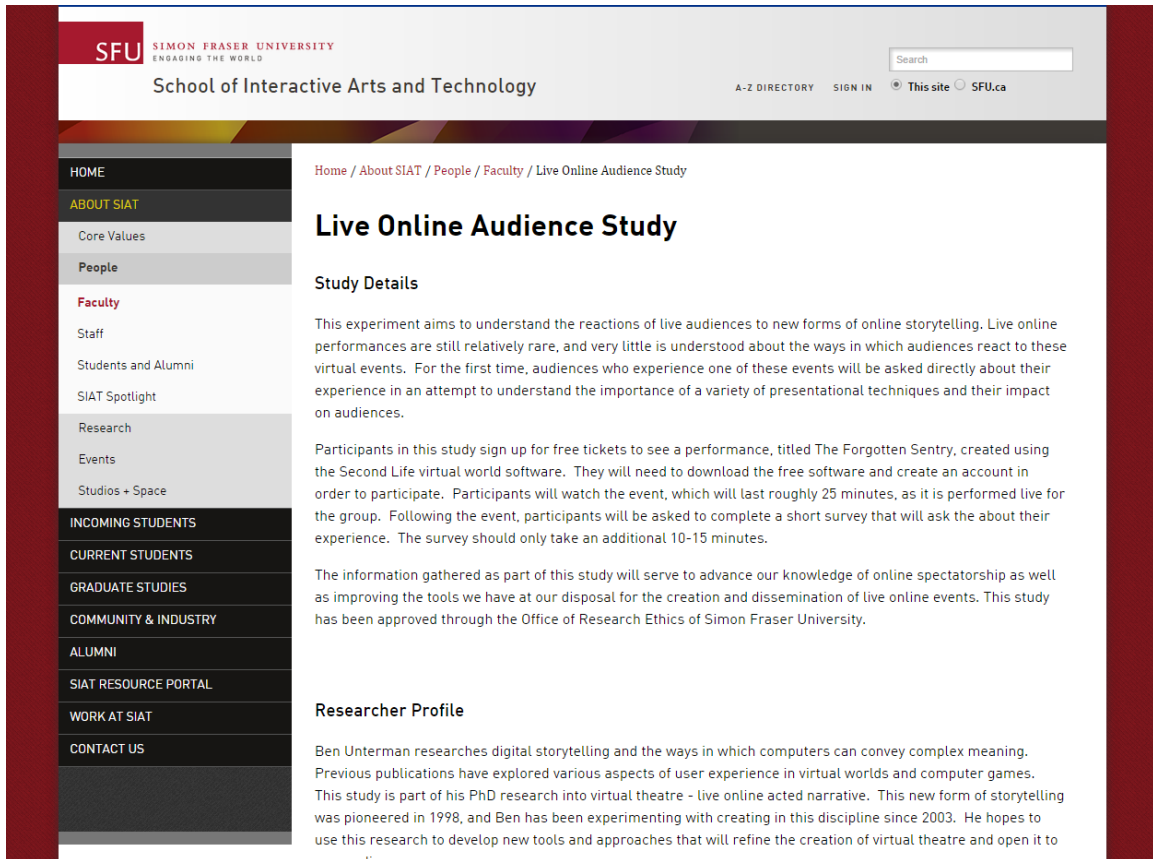


Figure 18: Experiment condition web page at SFU

In keeping with the goals of the experiment condition, participants viewing this web page are given very little information about *The Forgotten Sentry*, while maintaining the social context of academic experimentation. There are a few indications that the event will be a performance and they will act as audience (which may function as very basic thematic priming). The overall impact of the text on the web page is to reinforce the experimental nature of their experience. As a result, the cultural framing of participants' experience in this condition should be one of participating in an experiment. This reinforces our overall goal of using the experiment framing condition as a control group to compare to the other two conditions.

7.4.3 Second Life Waiting Area

The waiting area for the experiment condition needed to avoid content and thematic priming related to *The Forgotten Sentry* while maintaining the social context of academic experimentation. In order to accomplish this, we made use of an existing Second Life genetics laboratory designed and hosted by the University of Leicester. The GENIE virtual genetics lab was created to teach lab safety and allow simple experiments to be conducted in Second Life (Thorley, 2012). In this waiting area, participants could read about lab safety procedures and learn about genetic testing equipment, reinforcing the experimental nature of their experience. No content or thematic priming about *The Forgotten Sentry* was made available to participants in this space. A picture of the lab can be seen here:



Figure 19: GENIE Virtual Genetics Lab (McElhinney, 2010)

Using the virtual genetics lab as our waiting area for the experiment framing condition allowed us to avoid providing content or thematic priming cues to audiences. It is not intended as an effective approach to priming virtual theatre, but functions as a control group. This control condition allows us to communicate with participants using the same three elements as the art condition and entertainment condition, while not

preparing audiences for the experience of the performance itself. The strategies evident in our approaches to communication and waiting area selection reinforce this idea within this final condition.

The three methods of communicating information to participants in the experiment framing condition do not attempt to follow any patterns of framing used for theatrical mediations. The goal of this condition is to create a social framing condition that creates specific expectations that are unrelated to theatrical spectatorship. In doing so, the experiment framing condition

7.5 Framing Conditions Overview

The three framing conditions outlined here aim to provide participants in the three different experimental conditions with significantly different framing experiences based on existing models of framing theatrical mediations. The artistic framing condition, based on framing strategies from the stage theatre companies studied in Chapter 6, attempts to create an artistic social context for participants. The entertainment framing condition, based on written analyses of mainstream film framing strategies, attempts to create an entertainment-focused social context. Finally, the experiment framing condition attempts to avoid framing the performance itself by focusing on the academic rather than narrative elements.

By basing these conditions on existing mainstream framing conventions, we can use them to test the relative effectiveness of hope to be able to test the relative effectiveness of the existing models of framing. The artistic and entertainment models differ in their relative use of thematic and content priming, as well as using different web design strategies for their presentations. Artistic audience preparation often presents audiences with artwork before performances (as with Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival), and this was echoed in the experimental design. Multiplexes, on the other hand, allow audiences to access the theatre itself very early (Acland, 2003), which was used as the basis for our entertainment condition waiting area. These two strategies can be contrasted to the experiment framing condition, where all efforts were taken to avoid priming or framing the performance. These three conditions give us a grounded

approach to testing audience preparation strategies in virtual theatre, as reported in the following chapter.

Chapter 8.

Virtual Theatre Framing Experiment

This chapter reports on an exploratory experiment designed to test assumptions about framing in virtual theatre. The hypotheses and theories tested in this chapter are drawn directly from the first two research phases: the functional analysis of framing in theatrical mediation presented in Chapter 5 and the case studies based on expert interviews presented in Chapter 6. The experiment

presented in this chapter is based on a virtual theatre performance titled *The Forgotten Sentry*, which was specifically produced for use in this thesis research. The experiment is a mixed methods between subjects study that combines established copresence measurement tools with interviews designed to enhance the data provided in the questionnaire results.

The previous research phases lay the groundwork for an experimental analysis of copresence in virtual theatre. The analytical framework for understanding framing techniques presented in Chapter 5 forms the basis of the theoretical framing that creates the structure for this experiment. The strategic use of audience communication, web design, and virtual space design are drawn directly from the analysis of framing techniques in theatrical mediations. The qualitative data gathered from the case studies and expert interviews in Chapter 6 further informed the framing strategies used here by exposing current practices in stage theatre audience preparation. The results of these

Chapter Contents

- 8.1 The Forgotten Sentry
- 8.2 Experimental Methodology
 - 8.2.1 Participants
 - 8.2.2 Data Gathering
 - 8.2.3 Procedure
- 8.3 Results
 - 8.3.1 Questionnaire results
 - 8.3.2 Interview results
- 8.4 Discussion
 - 8.4.1 Experimental Hypotheses
 - 8.4.2 Actors and Characters
 - 8.4.3 Semantic Priming
 - 8.4.4 Prior Experience as Frame
- 8.5 Conclusions and Future Research

case studies along with literature on framing strategies in theatre and film were used to create three experimental framing conditions, presented in Chapter 7.

Virtual theatre, as defined in this thesis, is a form of theatrical mediation that presents enacted narrative in real time across a computer network. The literature review exploring theatrical mediations in Chapter 2 revealed three distinguishing features of theatrical mediations: the spatial relationship between audiences and performers, the temporal relationship of production and reception and the mode of enactment (whether the action was performed by a human actor or an avatar). The spatial relationship between audience and performer in virtual theatre is remote (the audience and performers are not in the same space). Accordingly, the strategies used to create a sense of closeness are technical in nature, making use of camera angles and special effects to create a sense of copresence between characters and audience members. Virtual theatre is temporally live, suggesting that the slower pacing and an aesthetic of unfinished spontaneity typical of theatre or live television would be more appropriate. Finally, virtual theatre uses avatars to enact the narrative, strengthening its ability to make use of symbolic or abstract narrative elements. The virtual theatre production commissioned for this experiment reflects these research findings in its aesthetic and design considerations.

The experiment presented in this chapter tests audience reports of copresence for a virtual theatre performance presented in Second Life. The virtual theatre performance commissioned for this experiment is *The Forgotten Sentry*, a short post-apocalyptic drama written by Nena St. Louis. The show was produced and directed by DC Spensley, a Second Life artist who has created many live works in Second Life and other virtual worlds. For the experiment, audience members were randomly divided into three groups derived from the patterns of framing strategies explored in this research: artistic framing, entertainment framing and experimental framing. The “artistic” framing strategies were derived from stage theatre using the evidence outlined in the analysis of stage theatre priming outlined in the case studies reported on in Chapter 6. The “entertainment” framing strategies were drawn from strategies used by the film industry, as reported on in the academic and industry literature outlined in Chapter 7. The third

“experimental” framing condition attempts to minimize framing by presenting the performance as a university research study.

As the literature review into copresence effects (Chapter 3) indicates, research into mediated copresence effects has mostly been conducted using an experimental model. A recent review of presence measurement strategies indicates that copresence and social presence are most frequently measured using post-test questionnaires that use semantic differentiation or Likert scale questions (Van Baren & IJsselsteijn, 2004). For this experiment, I have selected the copresence questionnaire that is the most closely related to a performative context (Nowak & Biocca, 2003). By using an existing validated questionnaire, the results can easily be compared to other studies of mediated copresence.

To better understand audience experience, a small number of participants were interviewed. The qualitative portion of this experiment serves both an explanatory and exploratory purpose. By coding participant responses in relation to their questionnaire answers, we are able to better explain the variability of the results. The interviews were also coded to highlight any in situ instances of unique experience, providing insight in to the diversity of audience experience in virtual theatre.

The results of this mixed-methods experimental approach gave insights into audience experience and highlighted topics that will be important in future investigations.

1. The lack of impact of our framing strategies on survey data suggests strongly that the approach of replicating strategies from stage theatre and film were not effective. This suggests that new framing strategies need to be developed for virtual theatre performances (this idea is developed further in Chapters 9 & 10).
2. Significant differences emerged in survey responses when participants were asked about characters as opposed to performers. Future research into this area has the potential to reveal insights into cognitive patterns surrounding characterization and identification.
3. Survey responses revealed that familiarity played a significant role in determining spatial presence but not copresence. This suggests that

medium familiarity plays a smaller role in social and narrative interactions than for simulation, although further research will need to be conducted to determine the extent of this effect.

4. Participant interviews revealed significant differences between the ways in which audience members understood the production and social context of *The Forgotten Sentry*. Further research will be required to determine the impact of prior knowledge of artistic, cultural and technological conventions on virtual theatre spectatorship.

The future research suggested by the results of this exploratory study provides a wide range of academic and artistic avenues for future work. These have the potential to deepen our knowledge of the cognitive underpinnings of spectatorship and better understand the ways in which audiences interpret media art. The results also point at refinements that should be made to virtual theatre framing techniques that can be applied to future productions.

8.1 The Forgotten Sentry

The virtual theatre performance used for this experiment was *The Forgotten Sentry*, a short post-apocalyptic drama written by Nena St. Louis specifically for this experiment. The show was produced and directed by DC Spensley, a Second Life artist who has created many live works in Second Life and other virtual worlds. The protagonist, The Soldier, was played by Vancouver actor Milton Lim and the supporting characters were played by Second Life performers wutchwhisper and buffy. Voice acting for the supporting cast was provided by: DC Spensley (Radio), Richard Wolfe (Old Man), Deena Easton (Biker), Sasha Crompton-Inglis (Kids), Louis Unterman (Kids & Boy) & Nikki Inglis (Woman).

The Forgotten Sentry is set in a near future where the world has been ravaged by a deadly epidemic. The few isolated cities not yet reached by the outbreak have been isolated from the rest of the world. An outpost high in the mountains is the last line of defense against those who are trying to break the quarantine and enter the city. The soldier protecting the city is running low on supplies and hasn't heard from headquarters

in months. Pushed to the limit, he must find ways to retain his humanity despite the brutality of his situation.

Over the course of the narrative, several people come to his outpost attempting to get into the city. In his interactions with them, the soldier reveals more about the situation as he turns each of them away. At the climax of *The Forgotten Sentry*, a woman and her child manage to get through the fence and the soldier is faced with an ethical dilemma. His orders are to shoot anyone crossing the fence, but he has not had any contact with headquarters for a long time. The resolution of the dilemma is left to the audience, who get to decide the woman's fate. The soldier either spares the woman and child or kills them depending on the audience's decision. The show ends when headquarters re-establishes radio contact and announces that a treatment has been found and the quarantine lifted.

The live performances in *The Forgotten Sentry* used different techniques to convey character information. The character of The Soldier was presented entirely live, with Milton Lim controlling the movement and speaking his lines in real time. The other characters' avatars' movement was controlled live by performers, but their voices were pre-recorded to allow a greater number of roles to be played by the two actors. The secondary characters' voice recordings were triggered in real time by DC. In addition, I controlled the camera angles live using a special interface designed for the show. As with most virtual theatre performances, the audience experience was a blend of live and recorded elements.

The audience seating also had an artistic function. By seating their avatars, participants allowed the artists to control their point of view. The production made use of different camera angles to frame and control the audience experience of the action. These changes in camera angles allowed for a greater control of the pacing and perspective of the performance. As a result, *The Forgotten Sentry* was evidently a live event, but also shared many aspects with the aesthetics of filmed narrative. Our goal for designing the show this way was to have common elements of different forms of theatrical mediation, increasing audience familiarity with the experience.

8.2 Experimental Methodology

This chapter presents an evaluation of the impact of framing on virtual theatre audiences using a sequential exploratory mixed methods approach. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three framing conditions described in Chapter 7, which framed the show in different ways through e-mail, websites, and Second Life waiting areas. Following the performance of *The Forgotten Sentry*, participants filled out a questionnaire based on an existing copresence questionnaire (Nowak & Biocca, 2003). In addition, a small number of participants was interviewed to gain additional insights into their experiences.

8.2.1 Participants

Participants were recruited through advertisements posted to Craigslist, and volunteered through an anonymous e-mail sent through that service. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three framing conditions described in Chapter 7 and issued a ticket number for the performance. Tickets were issued to 60 respondents, although many of those did not attend the performance. A total of 42 participants viewed the performance and completed the post-performance questionnaire. Of these, 28 were willing to be interviewed. Six participants were randomly selected to be interviewed and, of those, interviews were conducted with four participants.

8.2.2 Data Gathering

8.2.2.1 Copresence Questionnaire

Information about participants' experience of *The Forgotten Sentry* was gathered using an established copresence questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed by Nowak and Biocca (2003), combining different elements from existing questionnaires. Their questionnaire measures presence in three categories: telepresence (from Lombard & Ditton, 1999), copresence (from Burgoon & Hale, 1987) and social presence (from Short, Williams & Christie, 1976). Their questionnaire was listed as one of the established social presence questionnaires in the survey of presence measurement

tools endorsed by the International Society for Presence Research (van Baren & IJsselsteijn, 2004).

The questionnaire used to gather information about participants' feelings of presence during the performance is a Likert questionnaire using a 5-point scale adapted from the work of Nowak & Biocca (2003). The response questionnaire is divided into three parts which measure different aspects of presence in virtual environments: self-presence, copresence of others and immersion. The questionnaire has been slightly modified from the original because to make it fit the context of the virtual theatre performance. All references to "the interaction" in the original have been changed to "the performance" and references to "my partner" have been changed to "the characters" where appropriate or "the performers" when that didn't make sense. Otherwise, the specific questions and the order in which they were presented are the same as in the original study (Nowak & Biocca, 2003).

The questions used in the questionnaire are:

Self-presence (1 = Strongly Disagree / 5 = Strongly Agree)

1. I did not want a deeper relationship with the characters.
2. I wanted to maintain a sense of distance between myself and the characters.
3. I was unwilling to share personal information with the characters.
4. I wanted to make the performance more intimate.
5. I tried to create a sense of closeness with the characters.
6. I was interested in participating in the performance.

Others' Copresence (1 = Strongly Disagree / 5 = Strongly Agree)

1. The characters were intensely involved in our interaction.
2. The characters seemed to find the event stimulating.
3. The characters communicated coldness rather than warmth.
4. The characters created a sense of distance between us.
5. The characters seemed detached during the performance.

6. The characters were unwilling to share personal information with me.
7. The characters made the event seem intimate.
8. The characters created a sense of closeness between us.
9. The characters acted bored by the event.
10. The performers showed enthusiasm while performing.
11. The performers were interested in the performance.

Telepresence / Immersion (1 = Not at all / 5 = Very much)

1. How involving was the performance?
2. How intense was the performance?
3. To what extent did you feel like you were inside the environment?
4. To what extent did you feel immersed in the environment?
5. To what extent did you feel surrounded by the environment?

These questions, drawn from an established source in copresence research are intended to evaluate participants' involvement with the performance and the ways in which they see other people within the event itself. Van Baren and IJsselsteijn (2004) report that, while they are retrospective and subjective, the ease of use of these questionnaires and their excellent face validity make them a common and effective tool for measuring presence. In their evaluation of different presence measurement tools, they further point out that these questionnaires are particularly useful in understanding the presence of other people using mediated environments (van Baren & IJsselsteijn, 2004). Further, using a questionnaire from an established, published source helps increase the validity of the results and aids in comparing them to existing study results.

8.2.2.2 Interviews

At the end of the questionnaire, participants are asked to provide an e-mail address if they are willing to be interviewed as part of the experiment. Most participants submitted e-mail addresses and two were selected at random for each of the three framing conditions. Of the six participants contacted after the interview, interviews were successfully arranged with four participants. Even with the small number of interview participants typical of exploratory research, important findings emerged from the

interview process. These interviews use a semi-structured interview strategy that focused on creating additional clarity to help interpret the questionnaire results.

The interviews have two primary purposes: (1) evaluating audience experience as a function of unique individual interpretations, and (2) clarifying their responses to the questionnaire. These semi-directed interviews, used audience involvement questions and specific responses in the questionnaire as the starting point for discussion. This allowed the interview to be grounded in their personal experiences, highlighting the uniqueness of their experience. In this way, the interview results add an additional interpretive aspect which aids in the exploration of and expansion of our hypotheses about framing virtual theatre.

The interview results also aim to discover the ways in which participants' prior experiences influenced their experience of *The Forgotten Sentry*. Existing knowledge about virtual worlds, new media art and performance create powerful priming effects (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006), and have the potential to be very influential framing elements for virtual theatre audiences. Historical contextual knowledge cannot be controlled for by our experimental process, but it is very important to have additional insights about the contextual elements audiences use to understand the performances. Prior individual experiences are not considered in studies of mediated copresence, making the qualitative data gathered here useful for explaining audience experience and formulating hypotheses for future research.

Transcripts were coded to extract information about audience experience that was not accessible in the questionnaire data. The transcripts were coded specifically for comments related to the ways in which (1) technology, (2) social conventions and (3) personal interpretation affected their experience of *The Forgotten Sentry*. The data was then analysed to see the ways in which the participant's personal history affected their experience.

8.2.3 Procedure

For this experiment, participants were divided into three framing conditions and provided with different framing materials by e-mail, website and virtual waiting areas (a

detailed description and justification of the conditions can be found in Chapter 7). Following this, participants watched the virtual theatre performance, *The Forgotten Sentry*, with participants from all three conditions watching the same performance. Participants then filled out the questionnaire and some were interviewed. The experimental procedure used is summarized in the figure below:

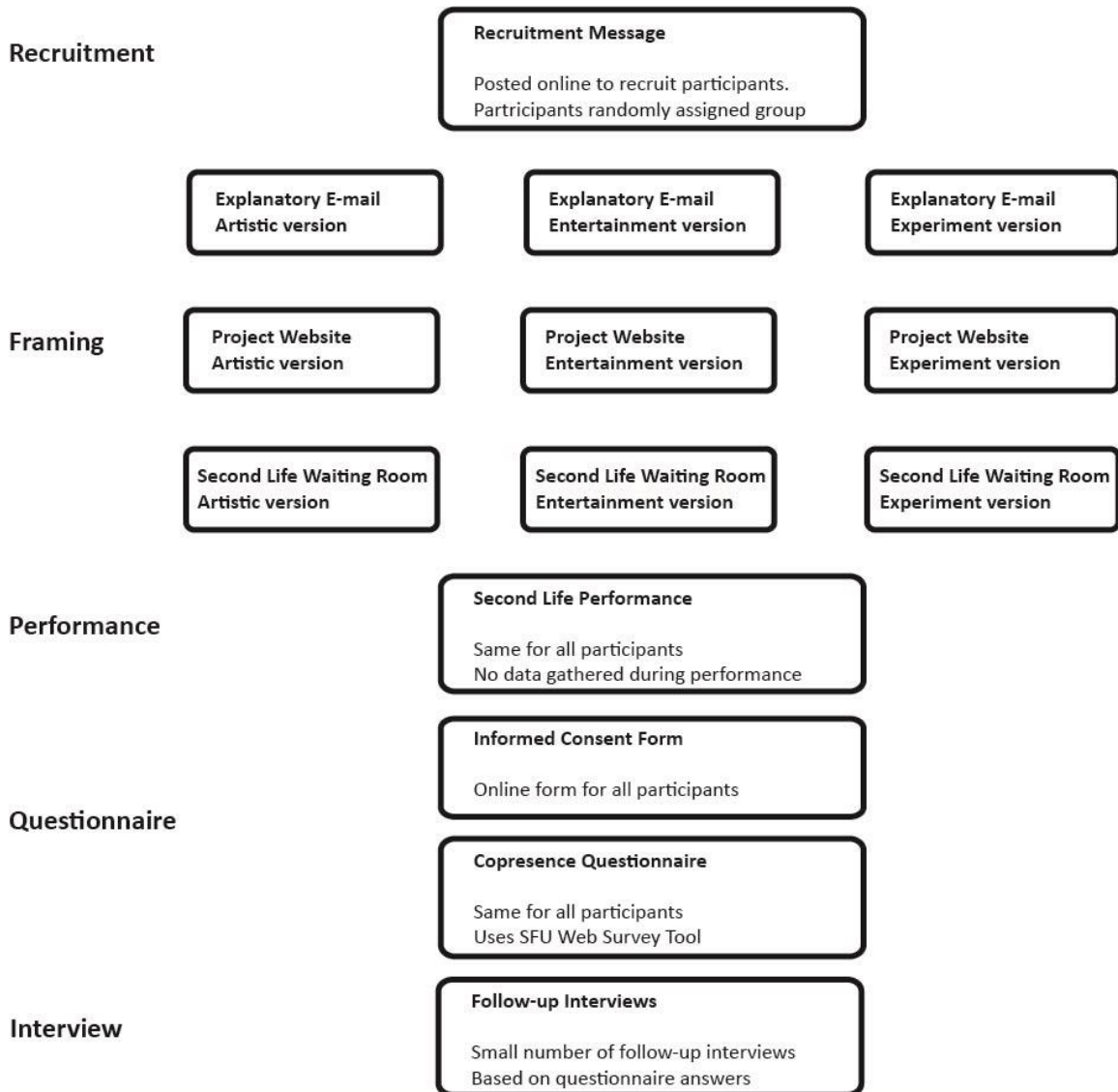


Figure 20: Experimental Procedure

Participants requesting tickets to the event were randomly assigned to one of the three framing conditions described above: Artistic, Entertainment or Experiment. A spreadsheet was used to randomly assign participants to the three conditions in such a

way as to ensure that roughly the same number of participants from each framing condition was attending each individual performance. This was done in order to reduce the effects that might emerge through differences between individual performances since the event itself was live.

Each participant was issued a ticket number that indicated the date, time and framing condition of the performance. The first two digits (16, 17 or 18) identified the date of the performance they attended (December 16, 17 or 18). This was followed by a letter (A or B), which indicated which of the two performances that day they were to attend (6:00 PM Pacific time or 8:00 Pacific time respectively). The following digit represented their framing condition (1 for artistic, 2 for entertainment and 3 for experiment). The final three digits counted the total number of tickets issued for that specific performance.

As described in Chapter 7, each participant was sent three types of framing materials that were designed to create different social and informational contexts for spectatorship. First, they were sent an introductory e-mail that provided them with information about the show and a link to that condition's website. Second, they visited the website that provided them with additional information and was designed using different informational and visual conventions. Third, they were directed to a waiting area in Second Life before the beginning of the performance. At the time of the performance (December 16 – 18, 2014), participants in all three groups were sent to the same viewing area to watch the performance.

Following the performance, a link to the copresence questionnaire was provided to participants using the Second Life chat. By clicking on this link, participants were sent to the SFU Survey tool, where the questionnaire was being administered. As per SFU policy, the data from the questionnaire has been stored only on local, secure devices. The last question on the questionnaire asked participants if they were willing to be interviewed, and 28 participants volunteered for the interview.

Of these participants, six (two from each framing condition) were randomly selected for interviews. Of those six, four responded to set up interview times. The

interviews were conducted by Skype on December 29 and 30, 2014. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and analysed as described below.

8.3 Results

8.3.1 Questionnaire results

Responses to the copresence questionnaire adapted from Nowak & Biocca (2003) were used to test three hypotheses derived from the theory building qualitative research in Chapter 5 (Framing Theatrical Mediations) and Chapter 6 (Case Studies in Theatrical Framing). Both the literature-based review of framing practices and the case studies of stage theatre companies suggested that the priming and framing strategies used in stage theatre and film were effective at preparing audiences. Two possible reasons for their effectiveness emerged from the research: information provided to audiences primed their interpretations, and the pre-show experienced framed the event in such a way that specific interpretive patterns of cognition were triggered.

Three hypotheses emerged from this research:

1. Participants in the Art Condition and the Entertainment Condition will have a greater feeling of self-presence, others' copresence and immersion than participants in the Experiment Condition.

The participants in the Art Condition and the Entertainment condition were provided with thematic and content priming related to the performance. The cognitive and experiential research in Chapters 5 & 6 suggested that this priming was an effective way to prepare audiences and would increase their experience of copresence effects. The lack of priming in the Experiment Condition should have the effect of making interpretation more taxing and limiting the copresence effects experienced by the audience.

2. Participants who use virtual worlds such as Second Life more often will have higher scores on the Others' Copresence and Telepresence Scales.

3. Participants who play multiplayer computer games more often will have higher scores for Others' Copresence and Telepresence.

The second and third hypotheses were designed to test whether prior experiences with virtual worlds had an impact on copresence effects. The cognitive research into the effects of repeated exposure on interpretation (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006), theories of social behaviour (Goffman, 1974; Baker, 1968) and theatrical reception theories (Ubersfeld, 1996) suggested that prior experiences are important elements of audience experience. These hypotheses were designed to test this assumption using the survey data.

ANOVA analysis was used to test relationships between the different conditions. Where significance was found, a linear regression model was run to determine the directionality of the effect. The results for self-presence, copresence and immersion (telepresence) reported by audience members were in the same range as those reported by the original study (Nowak & Biocca, 2003). Comparing the means reported illustrates that the research tool remains consistent. The range of means reported by this study is somewhat larger, an effect that is likely due to the smaller sample size available for this analysis.

	Nowak & Biocca (2003)	Study Results
Self-presence	3.10 – 3.18	2.99 – 3.36
Others' presence	3.13 – 3.17	3.14 – 3.36
Telepresence / Immersion	3.37 – 3.52	3.14 – 3.72

Several limitations restrict the validity of the questionnaire data.

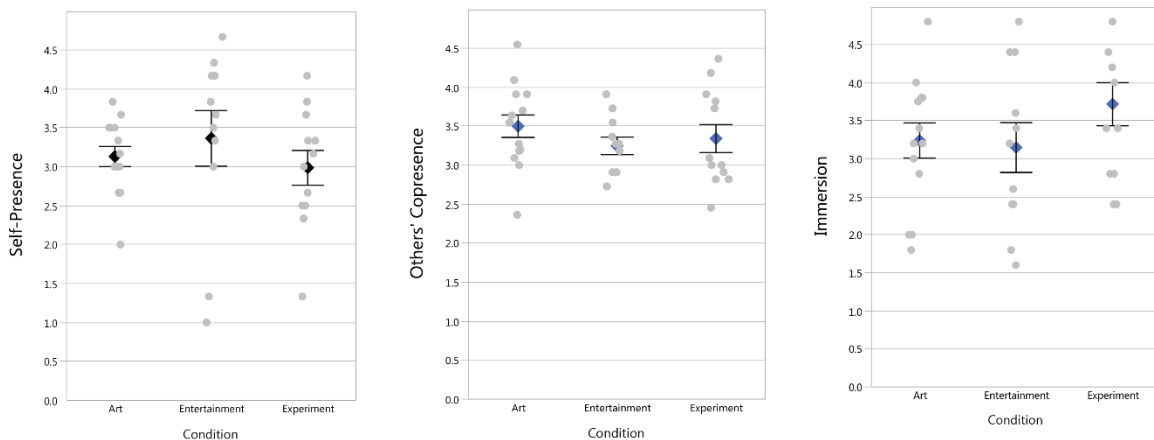
1. **Small sample size:** While 60 participants responded to our recruitment efforts, only 42 actually attended the performance and completed the survey. While this is a small number for a quantitative study, it is a larger than typical audience for a virtual theatre production.

2. **Likert questionnaires:** There is some debate in the mediated presence research about whether or not Likert questionnaires are suitable for evaluating presence. As Slater & Garau (2006) indicate, these measures rely on participant self-reports of their experience, making verification difficult.

Hypothesis I: Participants in the Art Condition and the Entertainment Condition will have a greater feeling of self-presence, others' copresence and immersion than participants in the Experiment Condition.

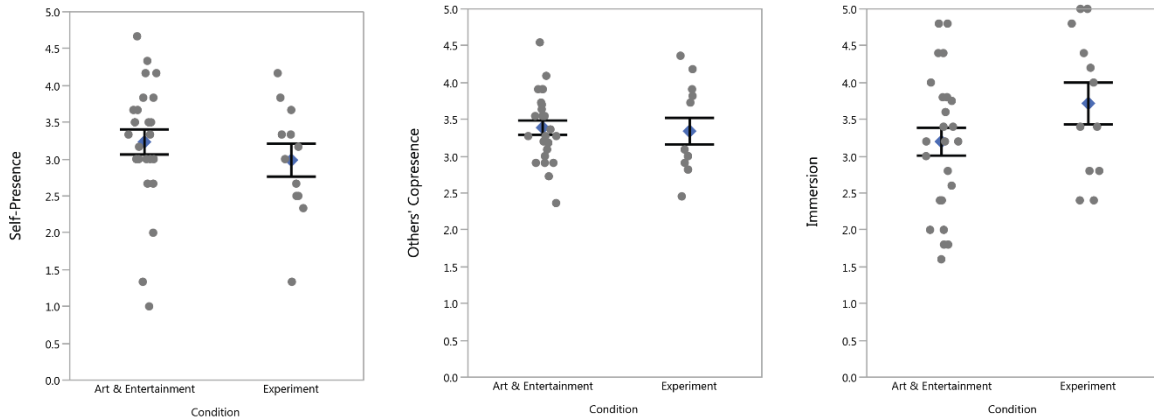
This hypothesis was not supported by the questionnaire data.

When the three framing conditions were tested against cumulative answers for Self-Presence, Others' Copresence and Immersion, the results failed to find significant results. Results were analysed using a one-way ANOVA analysis. Self-presence scores yielded an F ratio of $F(2,34) = 0.59$, $p = .56$; Others' Copresence scores yielded an F ratio of $F(2,34) = 0.73$, $p = .49$; Immersion scores yielded an F ratio of $F(2,34) = 1.19$, $p = .32$.



In order to isolate the effects of the control group, the questionnaire values for the Artistic and Entertainment conditions were treated as a single group. An ANOVA test comparing those results to those of the Experiment condition also did not reveal any significant results. Self-presence scores yielded an F ratio of $F(1,35)=.72$, $p=.40$; Others' Copresence scores yielded an F ratio of $F(1,35)=.07$, $p=.80$; Immersion scores yielded

an F ratio of $F(1,35)=2.38$, $p=.13$. It is interesting to note that the results for the Immersion scale come closest to being statistically significant, however the Experiment condition showed an increase in reports of immersion, the opposite of what was predicted in the experimental hypothesis.



These results suggest three possible interpretations. First, the framing and priming strategies tested here may not be effective in the context of virtual theatre, suggesting new framing strategies need to be formulated for future virtual theatre performances. Second, the effect of framing on copresence effects may be too small to detect given our experimental limitations. Third, the durability of the priming effects may not have been sufficient to have a demonstrable effect on reports of copresence after the performance.

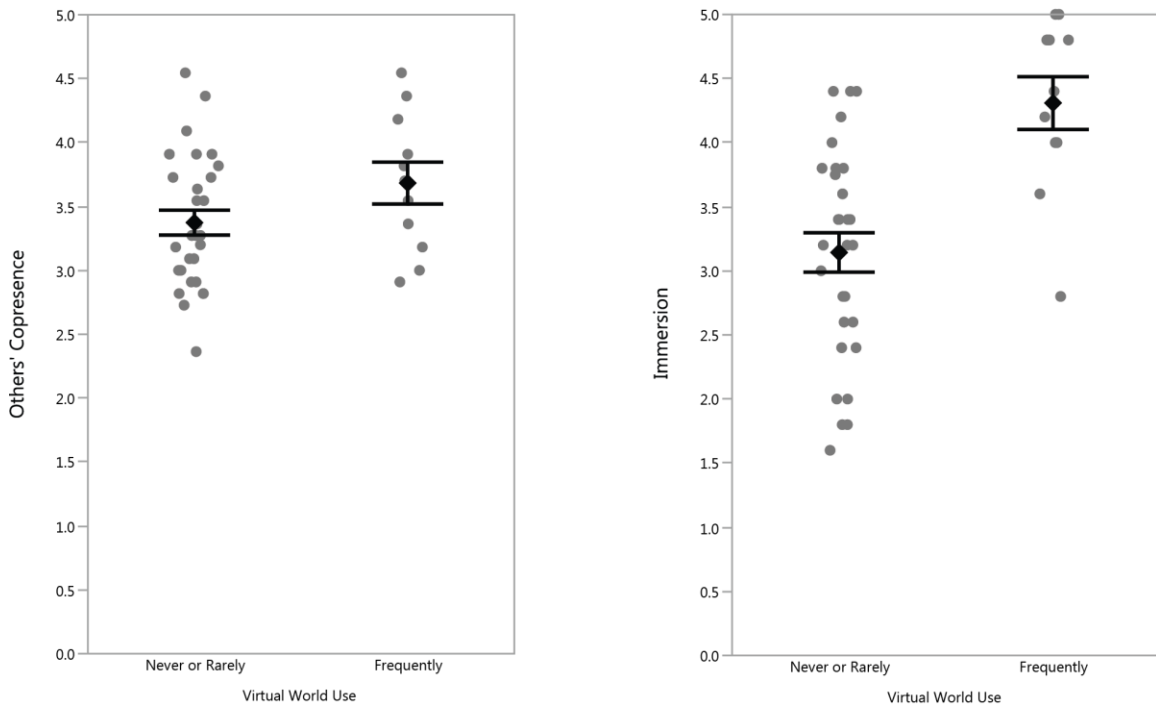
Hypothesis II: Participants who use virtual worlds such as Second Life more often will have higher scores on the Others' Copresence and Telepresence Scales.

This hypothesis was supported for Telepresence but not for Others' Copresence. Users' responses were grouped into two categories: those who "never" or "very rarely" use virtual world software and those who use it "weekly" or "multiple times each week." The average scores for both Others' Copresence and Immersion were higher for the group that used virtual worlds frequently.

Virtual World Use	Others' Copresence	Immersion
--------------------------	---------------------------	------------------

Never or Very Rarely	3.37	3.68
Frequently	3.14	4.30

These categories were compared using a one-way ANOVA test. For Others' Copresence, the differences between the means was not significant ($F(1,38)=2.74$, $p=.10$). The results of the ANOVA test for Immersion does show that the frequency of use of virtual worlds is correlated with feelings of immersion ($F(1,38)=17.19$, $p<.001$). These results suggest that frequent users of virtual worlds experience more immersion in these environments than those who do not.



The correlation between immersion and virtual world use supports the idea of prior experience facilitating the interpretation of in-world cues. The lack of significant results on the copresence scale suggests that the social context of the virtual theatre performance was significantly different from participants' normal experiences of virtual worlds. The novelty of the virtual theatre experience seems to affect participants' interpretations of copresence cues.

Hypothesis III: Participants who play multiplayer computer games more often will have higher scores for Others' Copresence and Telepresence

This hypothesis was not supported. There was very little difference between the means for the groups who frequently play multiplayer games and those who do not. No statistically significant difference was found for Others' Copresence ($F(1,34)=.06$, $p=.80$) or Immersion ($F(1,34)=.71$, $p=.40$). The use of multiplayer computer games does not seem to have a significant impact on our experiences of others' presence or our sense of immersion in virtual environments.

While the regular use of virtual worlds correlates with increased telepresence, the same is not true of multiplayer computer games. This suggests that there is something specific to non-ludic virtual worlds that enhances users' feelings of telepresence.

Observations About Copresence

The survey items about others' copresence were revelatory when examined individually. Of the 11 questions, nine (9) were phrased so that they asked about participants' evaluations of characters, while the final two (2) asked about participants' evaluations of the actors. Participants' responses were consistently very different across these two categories of questions, indicating that the audience members distinguished between the characters and the actors who played them:

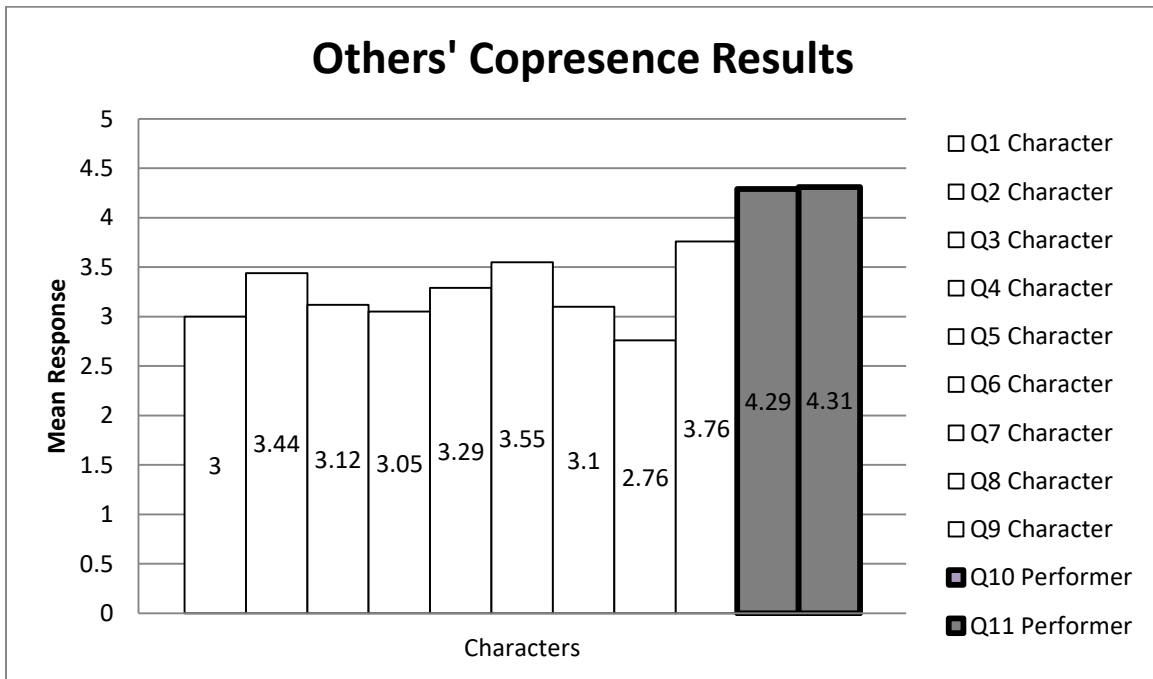


Figure 21: Others' Copresence Results (Character vs. Performer)

The distribution of the averages for participant responses about characters' and performers' copresence reinforces the idea that participants perceived the source of copresence effects as being related to the actor rather than the character. The overall average for the questions related to characters' copresence was 3.22. Only three of the 42 participants ranked the performers' presence at that level or below.

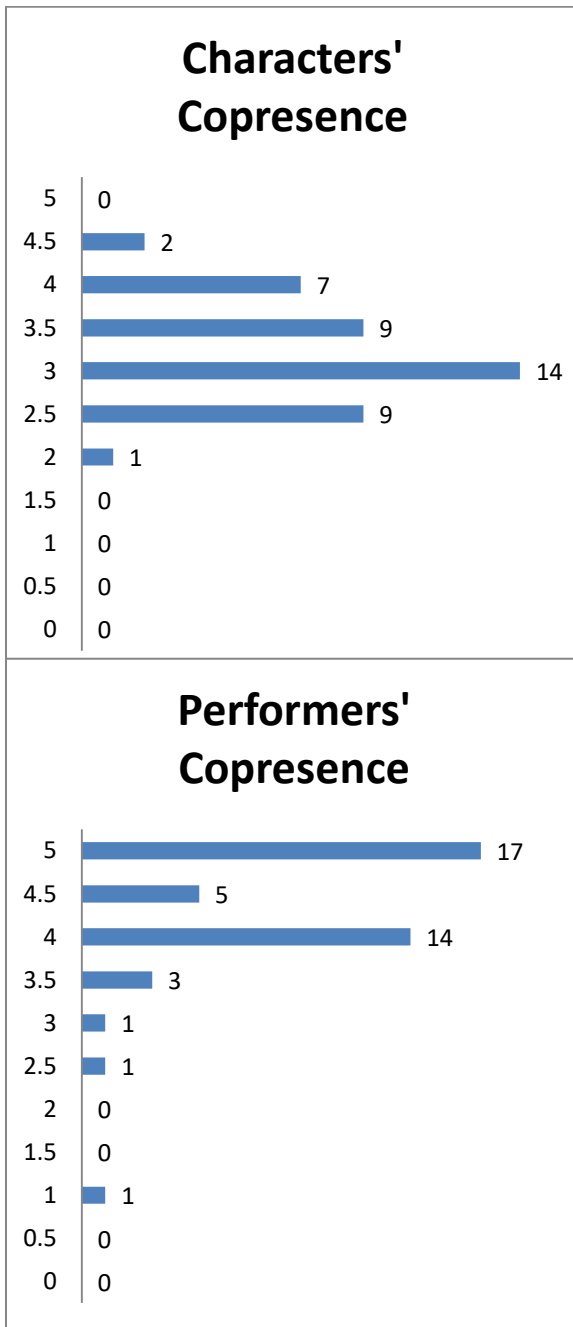


Figure 22: Characters' Copresence & Performers' Copresence

The questions about characters and performers addressed different aspects of copresence. Because of this, it is impossible to draw any statistical significance from these results. The differences between participants' interpretations of performers and

characters signal a direction for future research with wide reaching implications for cognitive studies of mediated presence and theatrical audience reception.

8.3.2 Interview results

Four participants were randomly selected for qualitative semi-structured interviews of audience experience. The smaller number of participants gave us the flexibility to run and analyse the exploratory study quickly, while maintaining diversity in our responses. As laid out in the ethics approval document for this study, they have been anonymized, being referred to here only by their ticket number (16B2014 – Entertainment Condition; 17A2001 – Entertainment Condition; 17B1003 – Art Condition; 18B3006 – Experiment Condition). The participants were asked about their reactions to the performance and asked to clarify some of their questionnaire responses.

The interview data allows us to better understand audience experience from an individual perspective. Based on the interview coding, I wanted to call attention to three aspects of audience experience: (1) website design, (2) participants' sense of liveness or immediacy, and (3) participants' sense of interaction or involvement.

8.3.2.1 Performance Website

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews indicates that audience members experienced notable differences between the three priming categories, a finding that was at odds with the statistical analysis results from the survey questionnaire. The entertainment condition website (www.theforgottensentry.com) had the most positive responses from participants. The interview subject in the art condition (www.pitheatre.com) felt that the website did not have an impact on their experience. The experiment condition website was seen as being unhelpful for audience members. The qualitative reports of website effectiveness were in line with our predicted experimental hypotheses, suggesting that the questionnaire being used did not detect this aspect of the audience experience.

The websites were used in similar ways by all of the interview subjects. Regardless of the condition, participants visited the website the day before (16B2014 & 18B3006) or the day of the performance (17B1003 & 17A2001). They looked through the

website very quickly “to get an overall sense of the piece” (16B2014), and then left. The speed with which the interview subjects viewed the website made it very important for the websites to convey information about the performance quickly.

The participants in the entertainment condition both reacted positively to the website, indicating that it helped prepare them for the performance. Participant 17A2001 stated: “[the website was useful] because I went into [the performance] having an idea of what I’m going to be expecting.” The combination of images and textual description made both participants feel prepared for the performance, giving them “a good sense of what the show would be like” (16B2014). The only negative response to the entertainment condition website was that it overemphasised interactivity, stating they thought the performance “would be more interactive, like we might even be the avatars having to wear an outfit” (17A2001). Both interview subjects in this condition agreed the website helped prepare them for the performance.

The art condition web page on the Pi Theatre website was seen as less useful by participant 17B1003. This participant thought the website was “useful, but obviously not that useful because I don’t remember it super well” (17B1003). While 17B1003 did not remember the show summary from the website, she did remark that the fact that “it was on a legitimate theatre company’s website... it legitimized it a bit.” She also noted that the website made her “want to know more about the director.” To synthesise these remarks, the subject felt that the website was effective at contextualizing the performance, but did not see this artistic context as having affected their experience of *The Forgotten Sentry*.

The experimental website was reported as being unhelpful. Participant 18B3006 pointed out that the website “was fairly theoretical and didn’t really describe in a practical sense... what I was going to experience.” Because of this, they reported that the website did not prepare them for the performance at all. In spite of this, they felt the show was “very interesting” and felt an attachment with the actors that “grew quite a bit when I realized that was a real actor.” Their feeling of copresence with the actors did not seem to be connected in any way to their experience of the website, suggesting that the framing did not have a negative impact on their overall experience.

The opinions that research subjects had of the level to which the websites prepared them to watch *The Forgotten Sentry* correspond with our expectations and our first experimental hypothesis. Based on these interviews, the entertainment website presented the story effectively and the art website provided contextual cues, while the entertainment website was seen as ineffective. The perceived level of preparation afforded by each of the websites did not translate to differences in the survey data. I address the implications of this in the discussion below.

8.3.2.2 Liveness and Immediacy

The interviews were coded to identify interview subjects' feelings of liveness and immediacy, features of mediated interaction often associated with presence and copresence (Auslander, 2008; Nowak & Biocca, 2003). We evaluated the ways in which feelings of liveness and immediacy were created and the means by which these effects were achieved. The interviews identified moments which emphasised liveness and changed perceptions of the actors. The interviews also showed that the ways that liveness was interpreted was closely related to prior experience with performance.

For Participant 18B3006, there was a moment in the production that reinforced the event's liveness. In the performance, "there was a really long pause because the main actor got disconnected.... That added more to the immediacy because you... were trying to fill time." This impacted their experience of the event because "when I felt that there was a human behind the character... that increased my attachment." The realization that the event was unfolding live was important for 18B3006 because it created a unique context: "This is right now. This is immediate. It's not in front of my physically, but it's actually happening live somewhere." The unplanned technical error in this particular performance shaped their experience of *The Forgotten Sentry*, reinforcing their sense of liveness and making the performance more compelling.

The limitations of Second Life created challenges for two interview subjects. Participants 16B2014 and 17B1003 both reported that the quality of the audio for the voice actors was a major hindrance to feeling a sense of connection to the characters. "I understood that there were two characters talking back and forth, but the quality of the sound didn't make it clear" (16B2014 transcript). Interview subject 17B1003 felt that the

sound quality made it difficult to judge whether characters were connecting to each other. These two participants both happened to be artists with different forms of involvement with performance art (17B1003) and video/sound production (16B2014). For these audience members with technical expertise, the technical aspects of the medium became the focal point of their experience. Their pre-existing knowledge was directly tied to the ways in which they understood the performance and connected with the characters.

The final interview subject (17A2001) was a frequent user of Second Life. From her perspective, the technique of controlling the audience's view (very uncommon in Second Life) made her "feel like I was inside or I was really watching the soldier." The voice acting also helped subject 17A2001 feel empathy for the character: [the actor playing the soldier] "did a great job at doing the two voices. That was pretty incredible." The key elements creating a sense of connection with the character for this interview subject were the elements that were not common in their experience in Second Life. These aspects were related to the technical and performative aspects of the performance rather than the narrative, underlining the importance of the use of this familiar medium for this audience member.

The capabilities of Second Life were a major influence in audience engagement with the characters in *The Forgotten Sentry*. As Feral suggests in her work on presence effects, technical and social limitations on artistic creativity play a major role in how presence is experienced (2012). The background of the interview subjects was a complicating factor in this case, as the interviews indicate that participants' focus and interpretation differed based on their own technical and artistic backgrounds. This reinforces the importance of pre-existing knowledge as a factor in framing. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to control for this in an experimental setting and additional research will have to be conducted to determine the extent of this effect.

8.3.2.3 Interaction and Involvement

Interview subjects reported different experiences of the interactivity inherent in the virtual theatre performance. As with their perceptions of liveness, participants' previous experiences were predictive of their evaluation of *The Forgotten Sentry*.

Responses to questions about interaction and involvement were closely tied to participants' familiarity with using virtual worlds such as Second Life.

One of the four interview subjects, 17A2001, had extensive experience in Second Life, including having been an audience member for several other virtual theatre events. While they enjoyed the use of the camera to control point of view, they were "imagining it to be a little more interactive, only because I have been at other performances, like some art sims, where it was like that." Because of these previous experiences she thought that "we might even be the avatars having to wear an outfit, that we are maybe one of the people inside the mountain." Previous experiences with Second Life performances framed this event in such a way as to make the interactivity that *The Forgotten Sentry* offered insufficient.

The other three interview subjects were wary of the idea of adding interactive elements to the performance. Participant 18B3006 stated that "it helped me a lot that I didn't have to move... it would have added a layer of complexity to the environment... I found that a lot better because I was able to absorb the experience without having to figure out where I needed to be." Participant 17B1003 likewise felt that the level of skill required for that additional interaction would be a barrier to audience involvement. The participants who were less familiar with Second Life wanted a much more passive experience where their lack of expertise with the system would not stand in the way of their appreciation of the experience. Participants were happy with the final interactive decision, but did not feel like additional interactivity would add to their experience. Previous experience, rather than our priming and framing conditions, seemed to be the most important framing factor influencing responses to interactivity.

Finding the appropriate level of interaction for audiences in virtual theatre productions is a significant challenge. Narrative considerations remain important, but differences in audience member skill level also need to be taken into account. Strategies that allow for different tiers of audience involvement would be difficult to formulate, but may be desirable in order to balance audience expectations.

8.4 Discussion

The results of the mixed-methods exploratory experiment into framing virtual theatre performance helped deepen our understanding of virtual theatre. The questionnaire did not yield significant results, suggesting that the question of framing virtual theatre is more complex than the experimental design accounted for. Some suggestions of additional complicating factors emerged in the interviews, allowing for the development of further hypotheses and directions for future research.

In this section, I discuss four different ways in which this experiment provides insight to be tested and validated at a future date.

1. The lack of statistical support for the experimental hypotheses may have been due to a number of factors, including sample size, the durability of priming effects and the sensitivity of the measurement tool.
2. The observed difference between how participants responded to questions about actors and questions about characters suggests that insights about cognitive approaches to spectatorship (including conceptual blending) may rely on this distinction.
3. The interviews suggested a connection between priming and feelings of preparation among audience members. Should this connection be verified by future research, it calls into doubt the connection between priming and copresence effects (although the effects of framing are still clear).
4. The detailed reactions to *The Forgotten Sentry* by interview subjects revealed that their prior experiences were themselves important framing factors for audiences.

The combined results provide additional insights into the effects of framing and priming strategies, reinforcing the importance of framing while indicating several avenues for future research.

8.4.1 Experimental Hypotheses

The lack of statistical support for the experimental hypotheses can be due to a number of different factors.

First, the sample size may not have been sufficient to detect the effects of priming on audience experience of copresence. The number of participants in this experiment was larger than a typical audience for a virtual theatre performance. Because of the lack of general knowledge of virtual theatre, attracting audiences large enough to represent a statistically significant sample size is a huge challenge. If the sample size was indeed too small to detect the effects of priming, this further suggests that the impact of priming on people's experience of copresence in a live narrative context is very small. To detect the effects of priming on copresence effects requires a much larger sample size and even more tightly controlled priming strategies, suggesting that this kind of test is best run using non-live theatrical narratives such as films or video games. The logistical challenges and costs of running an extended experiment on a live virtual theatre event would be prohibitive without significant external support.

Second, the effects of priming may not have lasted long enough to be reported in the final survey data. Many audience members visited the website the day before the performance, leaving a gap of 24 hours between when they experienced that stage of priming and the survey being taken. Even the priming that occurred inside Second Life itself occurred a full 30 minutes before the survey was taken. In the interim, participants witnessed a moderately complex narrative which required their attention and decision making skills. The priming literature suggests that without reinforcement and repetition, priming effects have a relatively short duration (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014). This suggests that by the time the show was complete, the impact of priming on audience experience of copresence may have passed.

Third, while the interview results indicate that the priming had an impact on audiences' subjective experiences and enjoyment of the performance, it may not have affected their feelings of copresence. Participant 18B3006 felt that they were unprepared for the performance, but found the experience very familiar because "it was just like going to an actual play.... You go walk into the theatre, you find your spot, you sit down

and you stay there and then stuff happens in front of you.” This suggests that the cognitive cues provided by the performance framing were sufficient to instigate the kind of cognitive blending that makes spectatorship effective. In spite of this, there were no differences in the ways that copresence was reported between priming conditions.

Finally, the priming strategies used in this experiment may not have been effective. As participant 17A2001 suggests, the neutrality of the original craigslist ad may have detracted from the specific strategies employed in the official priming conditions. In addition, participant 18B3006 indicated that, while the experimental- condition website and waiting area did not prepare them for the performance, they immediately recognized the seating area in the performance area as being theatrical in nature, possibly confounding that particular priming condition. It would have been very difficult to correct these two aspects of framing to make them more condition-specific without compromising the ability to randomly assign participants to conditions and to make the performances as experienced the same for all three priming conditions. Because of this, it would be difficult to run future trials to evaluate this effect using an experimental procedure.

8.4.2 Actors and Characters

While adapting the copresence questionnaire created by Nowak & Biocca (2003), I made an assumption about the ways in which it needed to be adapted. Because the context was that of a conversation in virtual space, all of the questions related to others' copresence in the original questionnaire referred to the participant's "interaction partner" (Nowak & Biocca, 2003, 487). In an attempt to adapt the questionnaire for a performance context, I changed that wording to "the characters" for most questions and to "the actors" for the last two questions. The difference between the questions was created because attributing interest and enthusiasm with communication to the characters would not have been logical. In doing so, we may have uncovered important information about the ways in which cognitive blending works in performance environments.

When speaking about theatre, audiences will often comment on the presence of an actor, but almost never the presence of their character (Power, 2008). At the same

time, we understand characters rather than actors having agency within the dramatic context (Power, 2008). The ability to understand a single person as being simultaneously actor (in a real-world context) and character (in the narrative context) is a prime example of cognitive blending (McConachie, 2013; McConachie, 2008; McConachie & Hart, 2006). This effect is clearly illustrated in the survey results, which show an average score of 3.23 when asking about the characters, but an average score of 4.30 when asking about the actors. Because different questions were asked about characters and actors, statistical equivalencies cannot be drawn, but the gap between how participants thought about actors' and characters' copresence merit more extensive future study.

Future experiments that distinguish between actor and character reactions in a variety of theatrical mediations could help illustrate the functioning of cognitive blending, and tell us more about how audiences perceive theatrical narrative. Additional research into this area could validate established theories of the cognition of spectatorship. Doing so would allow a great deal more understanding of how audiences approach enacted narrative and embodied performance in general.

8.4.3 Semantic Priming

The qualitative data provided by the interview process illustrates differences between the different priming groups. These effects are subtle, but indicate important strategic considerations for the presentation of virtual theatre performances. Participants who were given the entertainment priming felt more prepared for the performance and had more positive responses to the written and website material. Those who were given the artistic and experimental conditions, on the other hand, felt that these websites did not give them the information that they needed. Interview subjects' reported levels of preparation seemed to be directly related to the amount of content priming present in each of the framing conditions. While not directly related to feelings of copresence, these experiences did flavor their overall experience of the virtual theatre event.

As indicated by Elam (1980) and Goffman (1974), advertising and other forms of audience preparation are essential for conveying the proper codes for theatrical spectatorship. Advertising, whether in the form of trailers, posters or websites, also

conveys information about the genre and theme of the performance. This gives audience members an indication of what to expect, but also of what is expected of them. In non-experimental settings, where audience members self-select based on their interest in the production and its content, having this information available is vital, allowing audience members to select the performances they are most interested in. Advertising and other promotional materials give them a sense of what their experience will be, and has the potential to shape their interpretations of the performance.

The importance of having the normative information normally provided by promotional material is most clearly seen in the interview of participant 18A3006. Their reaction to the experimental condition website didn't "describe in a practical or in a more concrete sense what [they were] going to experience." As a result of this, their first clue as to the nature of the event was when they saw the audience seating area: "it was very familiar because it was just like going to an actual play. You know, when you go to an actual play, you walk into the theatre, you find your spot, you sit down and you stay there and then stuff happens in front of you." The lack of previous cues as to the nature of the virtual theatre event lent the audience seating additional weight as a signifier of the kinds of social and behavioral cues expected of participants. For 18A3006, the framing provided by the seating arrangements in the virtual space was sufficient to let them know what was expected of them as an audience and trigger cognitive models associated with spectatorship. This suggests quite strongly that framing factors are much more important than informational priming when preparing audiences and that the impact of priming is less important than hypothesized.

The participants who viewed the entertainment condition website felt by far the most prepared for the virtual theatre performance. As with the other conditions, participants in the entertainment condition only spent a short amount of time on the website, but reported it as being very useful. Participant 17A2001 stated that the website allowed them to "[go] into [the performance] having an idea of what I'm going to be expecting," while participant 16B2014 stated it gave them "a good sense of what the show would be like." The visual emphasis of the entertainment website made it easier to evaluate what was going to happen during the performance. This added familiarity before the event itself is potentially very important for new audience members who might

only be familiar with stage theatre or cinematic narratives. By using website and other promotional material that are familiar to audiences, we can increase the perceived accessibility of virtual theatre performances.

In spite of these differences in perceived accessibility, differences in interpretation, involvement or understanding of *The Forgotten Sentry* were notably absent from the interview data. This corroborates the negative findings in the quantitative results which found no correlation between our priming strategies and reports of copresence. Participant 18A3006, who did not receive any content or thematic priming, was able to understand what was happening in the event through the simple venue framing technique of having a recognizable audience seating area. Their familiarity with the social and behavioral expectations of spectatorship allowed them to participate fully in the performance, developing the same relationships and attachments with characters are reported by the other interview subjects.

If our results are valid, they strongly suggest that, of the two functions of framing established in Chapter 5, the creation of effective cognitive conditions through contextual framing has a greater impact on audience experience than the presentation of semantic priming. Our experiment focused primarily on semantic priming, since it is much easier to control for, and we may have missed the effects of contextual framing on our audience. Additional research will be required to test the extent to which physical and temporal framing facilitates the audience experience and to answer the questions that emerge from this conclusion.

1. Does a pre-show presentation give sufficient contextual information to trigger cognitive blending among audience members?
2. Does the theatrical-style group seating provide sufficient contextual information to trigger cognitive blending among audience members?
3. Can additional clarity in behavioral and social expectations further enhance audience experience of theatrical mediations?

The research designs needed to answer these questions will be complex and will require a careful mixed-methods approach in order to further our understanding of framing strategies.

8.4.4 Prior Experience as Frame

A great deal of literature has emerged around audience reception theories and models for stage theatre (e.g. Blau, 1990; Bennett, 1998), cinema (e.g. Staiger, 2005; Gray 2010). Most of these models make the assumption that audience members are relatively similar and that their behaviours and attitudes can be generalized. This field of audience analysis emerged at the same time as subjective reader-centric models of textual analysis, leading Bennett (1998) to conclude that, while audience members agree to behave passively, they maintain diverse interpretations of the event as it unfolds. These analyses are informed by advertising and intentional framing strategies, but also by specific expertise and cultural knowledge possessed by individual audience members. As Sauter (2002) points out, the tension between behavioural conformity and interpretive diversity is one of the major methodological challenges inherent in studying audiences.

Analysis of the interview data shows that each interview subject focused on different aspects of *The Forgotten*. Their distinct responses are largely attributable to their personal experiences rather than the framing that was established for the experiment. Previous experiences and knowledge are an extremely important aspect of priming and one that is almost impossible to control for in an experimental setting. The interviews clearly illustrate the degree to which these individual characteristics are important.

Participant 16B2014 is a graduate from a media arts graduate program. They have previously been a sound and media designer for live performances and media productions. Their reaction to the event was mixed: “the narrative for me was kind of the most entertaining part, but I think from a visual and auditory standpoint I was not all that, sort of, thrilled by the performance. Particularly by the audio portion of the performance seemed to have some difficulties.” Specifically, they felt that the low audio quality “distracted from my ability to connect with that character and to really get a strong sense of empathy for them.” They also commented that some of the camera angles weren’t quite right, further distancing them from the characters.

The responses of participant 16B2014 clearly come from significant experience in the area of technical production for media art. They focused on technical and strategic issues rather than the narrative or characters themselves. For participant 16B2014, their ability to connect with the characters faced primarily technical challenges. The issues that they identified were ones that they would have known how to address, suggesting that their attentional focus was driven by this professional expertise and that this had a significant impact on their perceived sense of presence.

Participant 17B1003 is a current undergraduate student in a media arts program. They also have experience as a performer in gallery-based performance art pieces. In their interview, they focused mostly on artistic concerns around the use of virtual worlds. For them, getting to try out virtual worlds “was one of the most enjoyable things for me... because they interest me.” Participant 17B1003 also identified the story rather than the medium as the source of their hesitations about the work: “I felt that the beginning of the story was more engaging than the end... I didn't feel that much connection with the voice actors, especially near the end with the kid and everything.... I think it was more the story than the medium, for me.” They found the soldier to be much more compelling than the other characters.

This participant's responses were also very closely tied to their previous lived experience as a performer and student of media art. By focusing on acting and narrative, they focused on the creative side of the production. This choice led them to focus on their particular individual expertise in creating characters on stage and framing these performances for an artistic context, a position that seems to be driven by personal experience.

Participant 17A2001 is a long-time frequent user of Second Life. Their responses to the event focused on the use of the medium itself and the technical and artistic virtuosity of the performance. They had a very good sense and appreciation of the challenges inherent in creating a work of this kind.

“when I first went in there I said: Oh! This is a pretty neat build. Because when I went to look from the inside out, from as if I was the guard, you could see how the audience was blocked out in this clever method of texturing one side of that wall to make it look like the granite.... Anyway, that was pretty clever. I liked that. I think it was

also a great opportunity to see Dan's technique; of the way he uses the camera view to take us to another view that you cannot control.”

To them, the camera control strategies were innovative as it is a very rarely used technique in Second Life. That technical innovation, along with certain tricks used in the design of the space helped create a sense of significance for the work.

Their familiarity with Second Life also had a significant impact on their response to the interactive strategies chosen for this performance. Rather than watching the show as presented, “I was trying to force my camera to see different or close up or something like that.” They also frequently compared this virtual theatre piece to others they had seen, in particular ones which allowed audience members to explore the virtual space more freely: “I thought it would be more interactive, like we might even be the avatars having to wear an outfit.” This affected their evaluation of how interactive the performance was. Because of their ability to control their own camera view, they were interacting in more ways than the other audience members. However, because of their expectations, they found the work to be less interactive than many other audience members. Participant 17A2001 had knowledge of previous events which impacted their interpretation of *The Forgotten Sentry*.

Participant 18B3006 was the only interview subject and one of the few survey participants who did not have a direct connection to the world of media art. They do have artistic interests, however, frequently attending theatre performances and classical music concerts. In their interview, they expressed their experience as a discovery of a new kind of experience. In order to make sense of it, they attempted to find similarities to their existing experience: “it was very familiar because it was just like going to an actual play. You know, when you go to an actual play, you walk into the theatre, you find your spot, you sit down and you stay there and then stuff happens in front of you.” They also drew parallels between their experience as spectator and being in a movie theatre: “it was kind of like when you watch a movie, and there’s a crowd around you, but you’re alone in your own little world.” By tying his experience of online theatre to previous experiences with stage theatre, film and video games, participant 18B3006 was able to make sense of this new experience.

The interview data strongly suggests that subjects' prior experiences with theatrical mediations and virtual worlds were the strongest aspect of framing. Prior audience experience is difficult to plan for as a producer and almost impossible to control in an experimental setting. Our experiment did not control for prior experience, perhaps accounting for the lack of significant differences between the framing conditions in the quantitative data. Indeed, the only significant result obtained from the quantitative data indicated a connection between experience with virtual worlds and telepresence, a result that points directly to the importance of prior experience with the medium. Finding quantitative evidence of the impact of prior experience would require an experiment designed specifically for this purpose with a much larger participant base that we had access to. That experiment could be conducted with non-live theatrical mediations as well, making it easier to replicate the results.

Our finding that prior experience has a contextual framing effect emphasizes the importance of audience development strategies, which focus on creating artistic communities through education and involvement. Audience development allows for the creation of experiences that will in turn serve as frames for future virtual theatre experiences. It also encourages the use of recognizable social and cultural signs that draw on prior experience in related areas. Making use of existing behavioral or social cues allows for relevant experiences to be used to engage audiences. Finally, contextual framing effects could shape the kinds of narrative that virtual theatre presents, focusing on those stories with identifiable conventions that will take advantage of audiences' knowledge of similar narrative forms. This research suggests that those strategies and others which leverage existing knowledge will be effective for framing virtual theatre performances.

8.5 Conclusions and Future Research

Conducting research into framing strategies for virtual theatre presents unique challenges. Audiences large enough to draw significant statistical conclusions are very difficult to find, making quantitative research more challenging. The digital nature of virtual theatre spectatorship also affects the ways in which audiences engage with framing materials and the performance itself. Prior experiences also play a significant

role in audience experience, and these elements are very difficult to control in an experimental setting. The ways that these challenges were reflected in this exploratory experiment suggests many directions for future research about virtual theatre and audience cognition more broadly.

The lack of significant results from the copresence questionnaire suggests additional refinements to this experimental process. While interview subjects indicated that the priming material had an impact on their experience, these effects were not apparent in the survey data. The inconclusive nature of the survey results could be attributed to the small sample size or the refinements in framing strategy indicated here. Audience recruitment strategies that do not bias framing effects are difficult to formulate, and other approaches may be needed to attract more people. Conducting more detailed qualitative studies (using written questionnaires, interviews or ethnographic approaches) may be a more effective way of conducting this research in the short term.

The results may also indicate that asking questions about copresence is not the most effective way of understanding priming effects in virtual theatre. Reports of copresence rely on the activation of the person schema (as defined by Smith, 1995). The person schema relies heavily on the sufficiency of the information conveyed about the character in triggering different response modalities for audiences (Smith, 1995). Since priming materials rarely contain significant information about the characters as people, the results of framing might not show up in this kind of evaluation of audience experience. The stark difference between how audiences reported characters' copresence as opposed to actors' copresence indicates that the different criteria are used to trigger the person schema depending on whether the intended target is the character or the actor voicing the role. This distinction is supported by studies of audiences for theatrical mediations using a variety of different approaches (McConachie, 2008; Radbourne, Glow & Johanson, 2013).

Audience interaction with the framing materials did not proceed as anticipated in our early designs. Interaction with the websites was limited to a very short visit, perhaps limiting the effectiveness of the framing strategies that relied on that delivery method. Audiences also did not interact with the waiting areas we provided. The interview

subjects indicated that while they were waiting for the show, they were actively engaged with other platforms, browsing the web or checking e-mails. Once the performance began, however, they turned their attention to what was happening in the virtual world.

The audience behaviour pattern which emerged through the experiment suggests two ways of approaching framing for virtual theatre. One approach would be to focus on providing effective cognitive triggers, foregoing the waiting areas entirely. Tactics such as theatrical-style seating and pre-show announcements were effective and signaling to audiences that the performance was about to begin, triggering behaviours typical of theatre spectatorship. A second approach would be to create a more interactive waiting area that audience members had to engage with directly. This could be accomplished using strategies drawn from theme park design (as suggested by Jenkins, 2004) or by leveraging the multimedia capabilities of virtual worlds to diversify pre-show experiences for audience members. These possible strategies are as of yet untested and would require additional research and refinement in order to determine their effectiveness.

The results shown here also illustrate the challenges inherent in studying audience priming techniques. Many elements of audience priming are very difficult to control, adding to the challenges of understanding the contextual elements which shape audience behaviour. Audience members' prior experiences played a much larger role in framing than we had originally anticipated. The complexity of these contextual elements is a significant challenge, and not one that has been entirely overcome by this research. Future research into the effects of prior experience on spectatorship is important for creating a deeper understanding of audience experience across theatrical mediations.

Priming and framing strategies do change the ways that audience members perceive their enjoyment of the work. Continued study of website design, audience outreach and community creation remains important to help refine our ability to effectively contextualize our performances. When combined with the knowledge gathered from the cognitive approach to framing presented in Chapter 5 or the case studies of stage theatre companies in Chapter 6, concrete recommendations about audience framing

strategies start to emerge. The application of these recommendations to a virtual theatre context is the final element of this thesis.

Chapter 9. Theorizing Framing and Copresence Effects in Virtual Theatre

The data gathered over the course of this thesis give us a clearer understanding of the impact of framing on theatrical mediation. The information drawn from the literature, case studies of theatrical framing practices and the copresence experiment combine to provide a unique insight into the uses of framing in the presentation of theatrical mediations. This chapter explores

those insights and proposes a theoretical framework that can be used to analyse and propose refinements to existing framing practices.

The explorations of framing in this thesis are based on two fundamental assumptions rooted in a cross-disciplinary literature review. The first is that stage theatre itself is a medium which can therefore be compared to other forms of enacted narrative. The second is that theatrical approaches to “presence” and mediated approaches to “copresence” are fundamentally related by the consciously constructed nature of interpersonal communication in media.

Analysis of a wide range of theatrical mediations in Chapter 2 concluded that a wide range of enacted narrative practices can be constructively compared and analysed using medium theory. The analysis of such theatrical media in terms of spatial relationships, temporal relationships and representational embodiment revealed

Chapter Contents

9.1 Elements of Framing Theatrical Mediations

9.1.1 Semantic priming:
Thematic Priming

9.1.2 Semantic Priming:
Content Priming

9.1.3 Contextual Framing:
Cognitive Triggers

9.1.4 Contextual Framing:
Cultural Value

9.2 Framing and Copresence Effects in Theatrical Mediation

important differences in aesthetic and narrative construction based on these primary properties of theatrical media.

The concept of “copresence effects,” introduced in Chapter 3, reframed both theatrical and digital presence as a carefully created cognitive construct. As both theatrical and media-centred research shows, copresence effects are created based on both perceptual and contextual cues. Interestingly, while the research explores the perceptual roots of copresence effects, the role of contextual cues is largely unexplored. This gap in the research was the driving force behind the decision to focus on framing strategies in this thesis.

In order to better understand the ways in which contextual elements affect copresence effects and theatrical reception, the thesis followed a 3-part mixed-methods approach. A cognitive breakdown of framing strategies in theatrical mediations was created to allow for a functional analysis of how theatrical mediations prepare audiences to experience a narrative event (Chapter 5). In order to fill a gap in the literature about framing, a case study into live art presentation companies was conducted, which revealed patterns in uses of priming and framing in stage theatre (Chapter 6). Finally, audience preparation strategies from both stage theatre and film were used to create framing conditions (Chapter 7) which were tested on a virtual theatre performance in a controlled experiment (Chapter 8).

The information gathered in each of these chapters plays allows for the creation of a coherent model of how theatrical mediations establish the conditions for the creation of copresence effects. While I will not rehash the findings of each of the chapters here, I feel it is important to begin to explore the ways in which these diverse approaches allow for a deeper understanding of framing strategies in audience mediation.

9.1 Elements of Framing Theatrical Mediations

This analysis will use the functional framework for analysing audience preparation proposed in Chapter 5 in order to structure observations and analysis drawn from various parts of this thesis. By understanding the diversity of framing strategies

already in use, as well as the outcome of our experimental process, the analysis here gets closer to a predictive model of audience preparation. Based on the model that has emerged from this research, we can begin to understand ways in which framing and priming can be strategized to better prepare audiences for theatrical narratives across media.

9.1.1 Semantic priming: Thematic Priming

Thematic information about a theatrical production provides information to an audience which helps them to interpret their experience. The review of framing strategies in Chapter 5 clearly indicates that thematic priming is an essential element of publicity strategies for theatrical mediations. This finding was confirmed in the case studies in Chapter 6 as well as with the analysis of film promotion literature used to establish the entertainment condition in Chapter 7. Priming strategies are also an important element of preshow strategies, and are part of the initial transitional framing experience of audience members. Thematic cues provide interpretive context for audience members and help alleviate some of the challenges inherent in observing and understanding theatrical narratives.

The case studies conducted in Chapter 6 showed that promotional materials for stage theatre focus primarily on genre and spectators' anticipated emotional experience. Thematic elements are used to attract audiences by establishing connections to experiences from their personal lives and other related narratives they might be familiar with. Focusing on thematic elements also allows companies to emphasise their individual mandates, maintaining coherent branding across many shows. As the materials analysed in the case studies indicate, thematic considerations help define design parameters for visual, print and audio promotion, including posters, online advertising and cinematic trailers.

Information about genre conventions is part of thematic priming for theatrical mediations, and is particularly important for virtual theatre. The ability of thematic priming to reduce the cognitive load associated with the interpretation of narrative is very important (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014; McConachie & Hart, 2006). Properly identifying genre conventions for audiences allows them to rely on familiar narrative tropes and

expend less energy interpreting narrative content. Both Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival prime their audiences with information about genre using both textual descriptions (as seen on their websites) and visual design cues (as seen in their posters and advertising). Illustrating the importance of properly priming genre, Gray's (2010) analysis of the trailer for *The Sweet Hereafter* show how trailers identifying a film with different genres in different markets can significantly affect public and critical reactions.

Information about the emotional tone of the performance is also a key element of priming strategies across theatrical mediations. Priming centred on emotional tone focuses on conveying information about the audience experience that the creators of the theatrical mediation want to convey. From a publicity perspective, this serves to guide audiences' purchases to focus on the kinds of events that they will enjoy (Janiszewski & Wyer, 2014). But they also provide an important contextual framework for interpretation for audiences once the performance begins (McConachie & Hart, 2006). Touchstone Theatre in particular relied heavily on priming audiences with information about emotional tone (Dunn interview). Because of its importance to audiences, this form of priming also needs to be used as part of the overall priming strategy.

These forms of priming are primarily conveyed through the use of design elements within promotional materials. Choices of images, colours and fonts are all active elements in conveying information about audience experience and expectations. For instance, the promotional materials from Touchstone Theatre's production of *Late Company* analysed in Chapter 6 focus very closely on thematic elements of the show, positioning it as a dining room drama that addresses themes of bullying based on sexuality (Touchstone Theatre, 2015). Their use of colour, the sparsity of the poster design and the costuming choices for the portrait used in promotional materials hint at these elements, helping audiences be prepared to experience the show in a particular way. As Dunn points out, Touchstone Theatre made a specific choice to prioritize thematic priming over content priming as part of their publicity strategy.

The effects of thematic priming are harder to discern in the virtual theatre experiment. The interview subjects who saw the entertainment-oriented website or art-oriented website reported feeling more prepared than those who saw the experimental

website that did not contain thematic priming. While participants felt more prepared with thematic priming, the effect of the thematic priming did not impact the results of the copresence survey (the possible reasons for this are discussed in detail in Chapters 8 and 10). This suggests that thematic priming has effects on spectatorship other than the creation of copresence effects.

The use of thematic priming is universal among theatrical mediations, and is particularly marked in periods of innovation within specific media. The example of early cinema illustrates this tendency very clearly. Early films tend to fall into one of three categories: documentation of the real world (travel or news films), filmed stage productions (for instance the productions of *Le Film d'Art*) or a cinema of attractions based heavily on late 19th century vaudeville traditions (for example the works of Melies) (Singer, 2001). As the technical capacity of cinema became more complex, stage theatre melodramas became the most common form of narrative cinema, drawing on audience familiarity with that form of theatrical narrative (Singer, 2001). The use of genre conventions and emotional priming during this period of technical innovation is one of the defining characteristics of film melodrama promotion (Singer, 2001).

This reliance on genre convention can also be seen in contemporary narrative video game design (Wolf, 2001). Many video game genres, such as horror or epic fantasy games make use of genre conventions that were first used in film, applying those to the new theatrical medium (Tavinor, 2009). The use of genre conventions in these narrative games facilitates player interaction with the game by making the plot and character actions more predictable, allowing players to focus on the interactive gameplay elements. An emphasis on conventional plot construction can also be attractive for virtual theatre performances, decreasing barriers for audiences and allowing them to have a more positive experience.

Thematic priming is very important for the development of audiences for theatrical mediations. It is relied on by stage theatre companies such as Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival (as seen in Chapter 6), and as a central element of film promotion (Gray, 2010; Jensen, 2014). There are many tools available for conveying thematic priming information to audiences, but show websites and trailers (both drawn

from priming traditions of filmed theatre events) have the most potential for attracting and maintaining audiences. Focusing on easily identified thematic and genre elements in the creative process is in many cases the first step toward preparing audiences for the theatrical event.

9.1.2 Semantic Priming: Content Priming

As with thematic priming, the novelty of the virtual theatre form makes it important that audiences have sufficient information to offset the cognitive load inherent in experiencing a new form of theatrical mediation. Finding the right balance between revealing information and maintaining suspense is a primary concern in both film (Gray, 2010) and stage theatre (Bouissac, 1987). This is corroborated by the interview data gathered as part of the *The Forgotten Sentry* experiment, which suggests that content priming is important for audiences to feel comfortable in the event, but that having too much detail would be a disadvantage. Establishing the optimal amount of content priming continues to be a challenge for the creators of theatrical mediations.

Most forms of theatrical mediation make use of some form of content priming. Stage theatre productions will usually introduce the main characters and give a synopsis of the events leading up to the beginning of the play (Gibbs interview). Some theatre companies, such as Touchstone Theatre explicitly avoid all content priming in their promotional material (Dunn interview). Since the 1940s, film promotion has started embracing content priming, including more and more narrative information in their trailers (Kernan, 2004). This increase in narrative content has been accompanied by a shift in trailer design and an increase in the extent to which trailers use clips from the film itself as a tool for introducing the story (Jensen, 2014). For both stage theatre and film, the information that is given to audiences is generally limited to the plot elements shown in the exposition section of the narrative. Content priming for all forms of theatrical mediation attempts to maintain suspense by not revealing too much narrative information.

Participants in the experimental phase of the thesis reacted to the levels of content priming typical of theatrical and cinematic websites positively. Conversely, participants who were exposed to experimental website without content priming felt

unprepared (although this might also be because of the absence of thematic priming in that condition). This would suggest that the amount of content priming that is made available in stage theatre and film promotion would also be appropriate virtual theatre, and by extension to other forms of theatrical mediation.

The format of content priming in theatrical mediation is also an important consideration. Textual descriptions are the primary source of content framing for stage theatre productions (for more detailed analysis, see Chapter 6). For recorded and emergent theatrical media, content priming tends to be more heavily mediated. Still images drawn from the production offer some insight into the content of the event. Most forms of recorded and emergent media also make use of trailers created using material drawn directly from the production itself. These trailers give viewers an abbreviated summary of the initial situation and characters and, occasionally, provide clues as to plot events further into the narrative (Gray, 2010). Trailers are also constructed with footage drawn from the production itself (Jensen, 2014) and the use of visual and audio from the production provides another approach to content priming.

The use of narrative content priming can be seen in our earlier example of the pre-show lineup for *Transformers: The Ride* at the Universal Studios Hollywood (*Inside the Magic*, 2012). In addition to preparing audiences for experiencing the central narrative contained within the ride, the sequence of videos in the lineup area provided detailed information about the narrative content of the experience itself. The videos were supplemented by the narrative information contained in the design of the space and the physical artefacts that were displayed for audiences. Content priming for *Transformers: The Ride* is delivered simultaneously through multiple media types, creating an immersive experience for audiences. As Jenkins (2004) points out, this kind of immersive narrative environment is particularly effective at providing content priming, as it provides content cues while maintaining sufficient ambiguity to maintain narrative suspense.

There is a wide variability in the amount of content priming seen as appropriate for theatrical mediations. The question of balancing the intrigue and interest provided by a more ambiguous approach with the ease of understanding provided by increased

content priming is an important consideration for any theatrical mediation. For the time being, both the research and our experiments into theatrical framing do not indicate the superiority of one strategy over another. In spite of that ambiguity, content priming strategies should be planned with audience experience and cultural specificity in mind.

9.1.3 Contextual Framing: Cognitive Triggers

Strategies associated with this framing function serve to prepare audiences by triggering cognitive strategies associated with spectatorship. These cognitive strategies allow audiences to easily distinguish which elements are part of the theatrical narrative (conceptual blending (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002)) and encourage interpretive models which allow them to empathize with characters and narrative situations (activation of the person schema (Smith, 1995)). Framing strategies used to transition audiences into the narrative experience can be categorized as follows:

1. Pre-show experience
2. Visual framing
3. Introductory framing

The first consideration when transitioning individuals into their roles as audience member is the design of the extra-theatrical space. The physical location of audiences can be highly varied in virtual theatre; these performances can be publically screened in galleries, or experienced from computers, tablets or phones in a variety of physical settings. While virtual theatre performers have very little control over the physical setting, a number of different strategies can be used to prepare audiences using extra-theatrical digital spaces.

Both stage and movie theatres use architectural strategies to control audience experience in extra-theatrical spaces (see Chapter 5 for detailed analysis). Each step of the audience's experience before they enter the theatre serves a liminal function, gradually separating audience members from their everyday lives and introducing them to the theatrical space. Spectators purchase tickets and present them for entrance to a lobby where they can purchase food in anticipation of the event. At an appointed time, they can then present their ticket again for admission to the room where the theatrical

mediation will take place. This has created a very effective process for introducing audiences to the theatrical context and is used in both stage theatre and movie theatres.

The behavioral process of gradually introducing audiences into the theatrical space is so effective that very little preparation specific to an individual performance is used. Both Touchstone Theatre and the PuSh Festival only use minimal additional preparation in their use of extra-theatrical spaces (see Chapter 6 for detailed analysis). At most, a few artist bios or show descriptions are available for audiences to read in the lobby. Movie theatres likewise are not customized for individual films, with lobby designs aiming to prepare audiences more generally for an entertainment experience rather than prepare them for a specific film (Acland, 2003).

Early virtual theatre performances often made use of digital equivalents to these extra-theatrical architectural spaces. Early performances in ATHEMOO took place in a text-based theatre, complete with two separate audience spaces, a lobby, and a stage which could be controlled to display descriptions of certain on-stage actions to the audience (Schrum, 1999). Performances of the Second Life Shakespeare Company took place inside a digital reconstruction of the Globe Theatre. These approaches frame virtual theatre performances as remediations of stage performance, providing behavioral and cognitive cues to their audiences because of their existing familiarity with stage theatre architecture.

The strategies employed for the virtual theatre experiment (Chapter 7) met with mixed results. The lack of impact of framing on the copresence questionnaire results strongly suggests that the waiting rooms designed for audiences were ineffective at creating the sense of expectation needed to provide a cognitive trigger for effective spectatorship. Interestingly, it was the auditorium design feature that was the most effective element, with an interview participant 18B3006 remarking “it was very familiar because it was just like going to an actual play. You know, when you go to an actual play, you walk into the theatre, you find your spot, you sit down and you stay there and then stuff happens in front of you.” In this case, the seating arrangements in the virtual world provided the cognitive trigger that audiences needed to trigger the cognitive modalities necessary for narrative reception. This observation validates the strategies

employed by the other virtual theatre examples in virtual worlds cited above, leveraging existing cognitive scripts associated with stage theatre and film spectatorship.

The lack of response to the lobby design strategies in our experiment suggests that different strategies may be more appropriate to the virtual world setting for virtual theatre. One potential strategy comes from level design strategies in video games, specifically the ways in which they borrow from theme park designs in the creation of virtual spaces containing implicit narrative meanings. Jenkins suggests using theme park construction as a model for virtual worlds, using elements of the spatial design in aesthetic and narrative ways to imply an experience for people walking in the park (2004). In this case, we are particularly interested in the design of the waiting areas for theme park rides. These waiting experiences are very carefully designed. Depending on the ride, the designs of the lineups use either thematic or narrative strategies to prepare users for the ride.

The Despicable Me ride at Universal Studios Hollywood (observed and documented in person on April 1, 2014) makes use of thematic strategies in creating their waiting area. The outside of the structure looks like Gru's house from the film, and opens into large courtyard. This courtyard is covered in minion recruitment poster, and screens along the lineup route show a looping video about the characters from the Despicable Me movies. Attendants in lab coats greet riders at the door, hand out 3D glasses and admit people into a trophy room that is the final waiting area before the ride itself. Every part of this experience uses thematic elements from the movie to remind people of the movie experience and create an atmosphere similar to that of the film. The experience relies on the simple narrative device of minion recruitment, but does not create a coherent sequential narrative.

The Transformers ride at Universal Studios Hollywood (observed and documented on April 1, 2014) takes a much more narrative approach to its preshow experience. The exterior is designed to look like a concrete bunker with a larger Transformers sign over the entrance. Inside, riders move through a series of rooms introducing them to the Transformers world. The waiting area is designed to look like a military bunker and contains physical artefacts belonging to the fictional world as well as

schematics and designs of new technologies. Each room of the preshow area contains a video designed to introduce audiences to the Transformers experience. Recordings of all stages of the video presented in the various rooms of the lineup are available online (Inside the Magic, 2012). The first video positions audience members as “recruits,” welcoming them and introducing both the human and robotic heroes of this universe (Inside the Magic, 2012). The second video introduces the evil robots and teaches ways of defending against them (Inside the Magic, 2012). In the third video, there is an emergency and the base is put on lockdown, suspending the training procedures while people evacuate (Inside the Magic, 2012). The fourth video shows the base under siege and asks “recruits” to help with a last-ditch escape mission (Inside the Magic, 2012). This preshow experience creates its own narrative arc, positioning the ride itself as the climax of a longer, more complex story. The framing used here becomes part of the narrative event and helps signify the importance of the experience in the ride portion of the overall experience.

The design of waiting lines for theme park rides is an important reference point for virtual theatre performances, as they help overcome some of the challenges identified by the experimental results. First, these waiting lines can’t be circumvented and must be navigated in order to access the ride. This design element carried over into virtual worlds opens the possibility of interactive spaces that precede the event, preparing audiences in ways more suited to virtual environments. Second, the introduction of aesthetic and narrative information in the waiting line design provides an excellent opportunity for thematic and content priming immediately before the event. The immediacy of this priming should make it more effective at guiding audience experiences according to cognitive priming theory. In addition, the potential for the waiting experience to convey narrative information allows for a shortening of the exposition phase of the live virtual theatre event, potentially streamlining the ways in which it delivers its own narrative content. Further testing and experimentation would be required to see how these design lessons might be applied to virtual theatre waiting areas, and the possibilities afforded by this design strategy are a significant avenue for future research.

Another possibility is suggested by the informal theatrical spaces used by The PuSh Festival and Music on Main. These spaces suggest a much less constrained

approach to spectatorship and allow audiences to engage with the performances in different ways. Behavioral conventions were indeed looser at Club PuSh, but when there was a ticketed performance, audiences reverted to normal behavioral patterns (Gibbs interview). This illustrates a strong connection between the ticket purchase and the spectatorial experience, suggesting that ticketing plays an important role as a cognitive trigger for stage theatre events.

Many forms of theatrical mediations make use of practical pre-show announcements as a way of separating the theatrical world from our everyday experience. Stage theatre and public filmed theatre both focus their announcements on audience behaviours, asking people to turn off their cell phones and refrain from speaking during the event. Many virtual theatre performances already make use of these announcements. For *The Forgotten Sentry*, we made use of attendants to help configure audience programs and the director made a short practical announcement before the performance. *Murder 2.0*, which I produced and directed in 2010 also used introductory announcements regarding the interactive options available to audiences during the performances. Such pre-show announcements allow for the establishment of behavioral conventions and to serve as one final indication to audience members that the performance is beginning.

Content warnings may serve a similar purpose in television broadcasts and online video. In Canada, content warnings are mandated by the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council and appear at the beginning of the show as well as after each commercial break (Canadian Broadcast Standards Council, 2002). Because content warnings appear between the commercials and the resumption of the show, they may also be functioning as triggering mechanisms for audiences to pay attention and shift their cognitive strategies. More study would be required to understand the extent of this effect for television and streaming video viewers.

Title sequences and introductory segments are also effective tools for letting audiences know the narrative is beginning. Used in a variety of theatrical mediations, title sequences serve to differentiate between the everyday world and the narrative event, “providing a focus that allows for a transition into the movie” (Stanitzek, 2009: 44).

The title sequence serves to let audiences know that they need to start focusing on the film, triggering the cognitive modes typical of spectatorship. Video games make use of two similar liminal experiences: the menu design that audiences navigate in order to start the game and opening cinematics which introduce the narrative context within which the gameplay takes place. The introduction of a theatrical narrative through the creation of semi-narrative paratexts is a powerful framing strategy.

The four framing techniques from other forms of theatrical mediation (waiting areas, pre-show announcements, opening credits, and visual framing) provide a range of options for framing theatrical mediations. As the copresence experiment in Chapter 8 showed, the direct use of approaches drawn from other media may not be effective for other forms of theatrical mediations. New strategies which combine elements of different forms of cognitive triggering from other context must be experimented with further to establish which framing approaches are the most appropriate for virtual theatre. Judicious use of these strategies will help create the cognitive context for effective perceptual strategies on the part of audience members.

9.1.4 Contextual Framing: Cultural Value

As outlined in Chapter 5, the creation of cultural value is the final way in which framing can impact audience experience. This aspect of framing focuses on increasing the perceived value of the experience of a particular theatrical event through the use of publicity and experience design. The comparison of framing strategies between stage theatre and commercial cinema in Chapter 7 shows some of the differences between the cultural strategies of these two forms. In each case, a specific cultural context is created through a combination of strategies designed to shape audience experience.

The case studies of Touchstone Theatre, the PuSh Festival and Music on Main revealed specific strategies in the creation of promotional material and website design that reinforce an artistic social context. Promotional material for all three companies was specifically designed to reinforce each company's mandate, highlighting the artistic nature of performances. The web design strategies of all three companies also followed a similar pattern, with individual shows occupying a single page within each company's website and following the same visual design patterns of the website as a whole. As

indicated in Chapter 7, the written emphasis on the emotional elements of narrative is also an indicator of an artistic cultural context.

The cultural context of these promotional materials is reinforced by the use of architectural cues. Theatrical architecture is seen as an important element of creating theatrical meaning (Esslin, 1991). For example, lobbies of many of the theatres used by the companies studied in Chapter 6 contain visual art to help create the atmosphere. In cities with a theatre district, patterns of artistic behaviour are extended even beyond the individual theatres, creating a behaviour setting that extends to an entire neighbourhood (Schechner, 2003). As Goffman (1974) points out, theatre buildings create a setting in which encourages specific behaviours and creates experiential expectations.

Similar tools are used differently to create a sense of entertainment for commercial film production. While cinema architecture used to be more oriented toward creating unique and culturally significant experiences, modern multiplexes have been designed to create as efficient and diverse an entertainment experience as possible (Acland, 2003). During the same period, film trailers have been more geared toward excitement and engagement (Jensen, 2014). An explosion of paratextual marketing and commercial spinoffs of film properties (Gray, 2010) has further reinforced a cultural context which values diversion and entertainment as its primary qualities. This is also reflected in cinematic web design strategies, which feature separate websites for each film with diverse content (Mitchell, 2006), and at times innovative approaches to interactive narrative within the website itself (Gray, 2010).

Creating a coherent cultural context is an enormous challenge for virtual theatre and one that is reflected in the outcome of the experiment in Chapter 8. By strategically replicating certain elements of cultural production from stage theatre and film, we attempted to create different cultural contexts. Through the use of the 3D graphical tools provided by Second Life and the application of cinematic pacing tools and camera control, we were able to create an environment and story that was at once novel and familiar for audiences. A majority of survey respondents (69%) reported a similarity with the experience of watching film or live performance. When asked about this response in the interviews, participants' reasoning varied widely, suggesting that the reasons for this

familiarity were varied. Participant 17B1003 felt that the experience was more like film because of the visual cuts between scenes as well as the lack of direct feedback to the actors (“I could be on my phone or doing whatever, and the actors would have no idea if I’m laughing or not, or crying or whatever.”). On the other hand, participant 18B3006 saw similarities with live performance and film. On one hand, they note that “it hit me, I think about maybe five minutes in, when I realized this is actually happening live” and “[the presentation space] was very familiar because it was just like going to an actual play.” Participant 18B3006 also noted that the relative isolation of the audience members from each other (“there’s a crowd around you but you’re alone in your own little world”) made the experience more like going to a movie. Familiarity with spectatorship in other forms of theatrical mediation helped audience members understand the nature of their experience, increasing the perceived cultural value of the work.

The interview results also showcase the effectiveness of architectural strategies for creating cultural contexts. In spite of feeling unprepared by the web content in the experiment framing condition, participant 18B3006 found familiarity in the rows of audience seating, stating that they were just like going to the theatre: “You go walk into the theatre, you find your spot, you sit down and you stay there and then stuff happens in front of you.” In this case, in spite of a lack of other cues, the fact that the audience for *The Forgotten Sentry* were seated in rows was enough of a social cue to make the cultural context of the performance clear. Like our discussion of genre and new theatrical mediations above, many of the social and cultural cues of spectatorship can be productively borrowed for new artistic experiments.

All three stages of thesis research reinforced the idea that cultural contexts are established through a combination of familiar and innovative approaches to framing. This can be seen in the case studies (most clearly in the case of the PuSh Festival), the literature on cinematic priming (Gray, 2010; Jensen, 2014) and the results of the virtual theatre experiment. The most important element of creating this kind of cultural frame seems to be maintaining a coherent cultural message through all aspects of framing strategy (as suggested by Goffman, 1974). Doing so can help recall and reinforce the prior experiences that the experiment showed had the most impact on audience reactions to *The Forgotten Sentry*.

9.2 Framing and Copresence Effects in Theatrical Mediation

The functional model of theatrical framing presented in this thesis represents a significant theoretical innovation. This model is consistent with theories of theatrical spectatorship, film studies of audience preparation strategies and cognitive approaches to spectatorship. As such, it has the potential to be generalizable across a number of disciplines and influence audience preparation for a broad range of theatrical and non-theatrical interactions. When this theory of framing is paired with the concept of copresence effects, it has the potential to serve as an analytical tool for mediated communication more broadly. While the functional model of framing proposed in this thesis has been validated and refined through both case studies and controlled experimental conditions, additional validation is still required before we can assert that this way of understanding framing has predictive value for theatrical mediations or other forms of mediated communication.

The findings of the experiment provided additional insights into the functioning of semantic priming as an element of framing strategy. For instance, the experimental findings did not suggest a significant difference between priming that focuses primarily on thematic aspects as compared to priming which focuses more heavily on content. The findings did suggest, however, that a lack of priming resulted in participants feeling less prepared at the beginning of the performance. The data from the experiment suggests that there is no right way to use priming to prepare audiences, as long as the goals of priming remain consistent enough to create a coherent social and cultural context.

The research findings about the importance of prior experience and familiarity also play an important role reinforcing and augmenting the functional model of framing. As suggested above, the importance of familiarity to audience reactions can be used as the basis for important framing strategies. As research into consumer behaviour has shown, repeated exposure to specific ideas can help create a sense of familiarity (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2006). Theatrical mediations can also leverage familiarity with other forms of narrative or cultural construction. Using priming to reinforce familiar genres or tropes may help attract broader audiences. Familiarity may also be a powerful

tool in the creation of cultural contexts for spectatorship, especially where we can draw on very well established patterns of behaviour (such as theatrical seating configurations). A move toward leveraging social and narrative familiarity is not dissimilar to the ways in which early film co-opted the contexts and themes of vaudeville and melodrama in establishing film as a narrative form (Singer, 2001).

The functional model of presence also has implications for how we understand copresence effects. As elaborated in Chapter 3, the importance of the concept of “copresence effects” is the recognition that our feelings of copresence in virtual environments are fabricated rather than organic. The visual, textual and auditory stimuli combine with the expectations we have formed based on different forms of framing and priming to create the illusion of copresence. Based on the evidence provided by the interviews in the experimental process, it is clear that spectators are aware of this artificiality. In spite of this awareness, they reported feeling connected to the protagonist of the story and having empathic responses to the situations he found himself in, all indicators of copresence in the literature.

The fact that spectators’ responses were consistent with feelings of copresence while an awareness of the artificiality of that copresence was maintained suggests that the heuristics of interpersonal interaction were triggered by the event. The characters of *The Forgotten Sentry* were consistent enough with spectators’ own person schemas (as defined by Smith, 1995) that they were willing to accept the illusion of their copresence for the duration of the performance. Their ability to simultaneously accept the character as a present person and retain the knowledge that they were not illustrates that cognitive blending applies to virtual theatre characters. The importance of cognitive blending in turn exposes the fact that audiences approach characters with an awareness that they are located distantly, making the experience of copresence much more explicitly a form of copresence effect. Audiences are not experiencing copresence per se, but an iconic representation of copresence that they are willing to accept for the purposes of their narrative experience.

Copresence and copresence effects may be reported differently by study participants. Because of the duality of personification in virtual theatre (the avatar being

controlled is at once representative of the character and the actor), ambiguity is created when it comes to the locus of the copresence effect. This may affect the ways in which response questionnaires are completed by participants, as different users may have different approaches and interpretations vis a vis the important elements of their relationship to the people represented by the avatars. I believe that this ambiguity is at the root of the differences between how copresence was reported in relation to characters and how it was reported in relation to actors. Additional research will be required to more fully understand this difference, but it highlights the ways in which copresence effects are differentiated depending on the specific ways questions about copresence are asked.

I would argue that, while the duality of personification reflected in the questionnaire results about copresence is explicit in virtual theatre, the same phenomenon is present in other forms of online communication as well. While the duality and theatricality of online self-presentation is well represented in the humanities literature concerning online interaction, it is largely absent from most presence research. Notable exceptions include Jeremy Bailenson's research into character identification in virtual worlds (Bailenson, Yee, Merget & Schroeder, 2006; Yee & Bailenson, 2007), and Maia Garau's work on behavioural fidelity (Garau, 2003). Exploring the problem of online copresence in terms of copresence effects provides a conceptual framework that has the potential to address many of these gaps in the current research into mediated copresence. While this thesis goes some ways toward identifying this problem, additional focused research into the "copresence effects" model is necessary to determine its relevance and the extent of its effects on interpersonal communication online.

The premise that mediated copresence is a copresence effect requires a closer look at framing tools and strategies for both theatrical mediations and mediated communication in general. The functional model of framing provided in this thesis provides a versatile and comprehensive model to both plan framing strategies and evaluate existing approaches. The breakdown of the cognitive impacts of framing allow for a greater focus on specific aspects of user experience across a variety of digital narrative platforms, including virtual theatre, video games and online video streaming.

This cognitive approach also allows for deeper insights into other forms of online interaction by highlighting the need for the concept of “copresence effects” as a fundamental shift in the ways in which we conceive of online copresence. These significant contributions to our knowledge in these diverse fields, in turn, signal the need for additional research to be conducted to confirm and extend these findings. The research conducted for this thesis has provided us with important knowledge about framing in virtual theatre and about online copresence effects in general.

Chapter 10. Thesis Scope and New Research Directions

The primary goal of this thesis research was the development of the foundational research necessary to better understand theatrical framing techniques within the context of virtual theatre. This thesis also seeks

to create framing strategies that are relevant for virtual theatre practitioners. In the course of this research, decisions were made that limit the scope of the research and have an impact on the significance of the conclusions that can be drawn from this thesis alone. Taken together, the elements of this thesis represent the foundation of a program of research designed to elaborate on framing conditions across theatrical mediations but which was, unfortunately, beyond the scope of a PhD thesis project.

Chapter Contents

- 10.1 Stage Theatre Case Studies
- 10.2 Experimental Framing Conditions
- 10.3 Experimental Questionnaire
- 10.4 Future Research Directions

10.1 Stage Theatre Case Studies

One of the gaps identified in the research into theatrical framing was a lack of published information about framing techniques in stage theatre. In order to formulate a framing strategy for our experimental process that accurately reflected theatrical framing strategies, a small case study of a diverse cross-section of Vancouver stage theatre companies was conducted. While it was sufficient to create a template for the artistic framing condition of our experiment, limitations in the way that this research was conducted limited the potential significance of the observations that emerged from the case studies themselves. These gaps in the thesis findings open the door for new and relevant future research directions.

Driven by the need to limit the scope of this element of the thesis research, the selection of theatre companies used for case studies was very constrained. While efforts were made to study as broad a cross-section as possible of Vancouver-based live art companies, a larger and more diverse sample of theatre companies would be necessary to draw broader conclusions about stage theatre framing strategies and their effectiveness. The identified lack in published research in this area make this a compelling avenue for future research once the shortcomings of the case study in this thesis have been identified and addressed.

By using only Vancouver-based companies, these case studies miss potential geographical and cultural differences in stage theatre framing strategies. While it is a culturally diverse and cosmopolitan city, Vancouver lacks the theatrical range of some larger markets such as New York, London or Berlin. There may be significant differences in the ways in which theatrical framing is approached in these markets that are not captured by the current case studies. The selection of theatre companies in this thesis also neglects to explore the nature of theatrical framing in much smaller markets, where a city may be served by a very small number of companies. While this kind of comprehensive study was beyond the scope of this thesis, a return to this research would certainly require that data on theatrical framing be gathered from a broader geographical spectrum.

There are also economic limitations to the companies studied here. Efforts were taken to select diverse companies for this study, but greater levels of diversity would be required to draw broader conclusions about theatrical framing strategies. This thesis lacked theatre companies both at the top and bottom end of the economic spectrum, and is thus potentially missing strategies employed by both very large and very small theatre companies. Distinct framing strategies would be expected from these companies compared to those studied here due to the level of resources available to the companies as well as differences in the social and cultural contexts of spectatorship. A more comprehensive look at theatrical framing strategies would require additional cases at both ends of the economic spectrum.

Finally, by focusing on mainstream live art companies, these case studies do not engage with some less common but nonetheless important models of theatrical production. Many of these areas have been the subject of study, making them an interesting counterpoint to a more comprehensive approach to theatrical framing. Touring companies face challenges in establishing effective framing for a single show across many markets. The Cirque du Soleil has been studied extensively (e.g. Leroux & Baston, 2016), with particular emphasis on its creation of an international spectatorial context for their performances. Companies which focus on interaction, such as Punchdrunk, must create a social context in which traditionally passive audiences become active participants in the show (White, 2013; Machon, 2013). Companies which rely heavily on multimedia or intermedia techniques also occupy a unique place within the cultural landscape of stage theatre and merit further exploration. For companies in each of these areas, unique production and aesthetic circumstances increase the challenge inherent in creating effective contexts for spectatorship.

Both the purpose and methodological approach to the case studies in this thesis were much more limited than this ambitious research plan. But in spite of the much more limited scope, they effectively highlight the need to have this particular gap in the research filled. The functional cognitive approach to framing strategies presented in Chapter 5 provides a rigorous framework within which to compare the diverse creative and cultural contexts of contemporary stage theatre. Any comprehensive approach to studying framing techniques in stage theatre will have to address theatre companies across a much broader geographic, economic and creative spectrum than what was engaged with in the case studies in this thesis. Such a research program, conducted under the theoretical structures elaborated in this thesis, would be a very valuable extension of this thesis research.

10.2 Experimental Framing Conditions

The experimental portion of this thesis made use of three tightly controlled framing conditions to test the effectiveness of established framing techniques. The details of the artistic, entertainment and experiment conditions are outlined in Chapter 7. In order to test existing mainstream framing techniques in the context of virtual theatre,

the artistic condition was based on stage theatre framing, while the entertainment condition was based on commercial film framing. While this is a reasonable first step for exploring framing techniques, the lack of significant statistical results suggests that these framing conditions were not effective in the context of virtual theatre. In this section, I want to explore the differences in mediation between stage theatre and film on one hand and virtual theatre on the other as a potential cause of the experimental findings.

One of the observations that emerged from the experimental interviews is that participants did not interact very much with the framing materials that were put in place across the three conditions. All of the interview subjects reported only having viewed the performance website briefly the day before (16B2014 & 18B3006) or the day of the performance (17B1003 & 17A2001). Participants also reported either skipping the waiting areas entirely or being engaged with other tasks (checking e-mail, etc.) while their avatar was in the waiting area. These behaviours may be typical of online interactions, but they are actively counterproductive for the approaches to framing used in the experiment. This suggests that framing approaches drawn from digital environments may be more effective for virtual theatre performances and that these would also need to be tested to get more relevant experimental results.

The decision to use methods drawn from stage theatre and film was not without significant findings, however. As the interview results show, participants in the experiment condition recognized the social context of theatrical seating, providing them with framing for audience behaviour in spite of our attempts to minimize it for that group of participants. Theatrical seating arrangements are still effective at creating spectatorial contexts in virtual worlds. This finding illustrates the potential importance that behavioral conventions from stage theatre and film contexts for virtual theatre spectatorship.

Framing techniques borrowed from game level design or theme parks (as described by Jenkins, 2004) may provide one solution for virtual theatre. A sequential and interactive waiting experience such as that of the Transformers ride (described in Chapter 9) may be a more effective introduction to a virtual theatre experience than the more passive theatrical or cinematic waiting areas. Tutorial levels for video games follow similar design patterns, introducing the game using a scaled-down version of gameplay

(Gee, 2005). By leveraging the familiarity of such tutorial levels, we may be able to create a pre-show experience that is more relevant to experiencing theatrical narrative in virtual worlds.

Another possibility for virtual theatre framing drawn from digital contexts is the use of non-linear data storage and retrieval. By using what Bolter & Grusin (1999) call the logic of hypermediation, multimedia data retrieval is another potential source of new forms of framing for virtual theatre. This approach to framing virtual theatre would provide information about the performance in a variety of different formats (video, images, websites, etc.). Approaching the creation of narrative contexts this way references Murray's exploration of the encyclopedic properties of digital media (1997) for the creation of narrative media. Media could be accessed either within the virtual world itself or through a menu system of additional content reminiscent of video game or digital video menus.

Testing these ideas would be the next step in trying to refine framing techniques for virtual theatre. Ultimately, I believe it is in the confluence of theatrical and digital framing techniques that the most effective approaches to virtual theatre framing will emerge. The study reported on in this thesis focused primarily on semantic priming differences, with very little effect; the next logical step in this research would be to focus on context. A series of experiments focused on contextual framing strategies drawn from digital media and information design would deepen our understanding of framing for virtual theatre and other forms of digital narrative, building on the work already done here.

10.3 Experimental Questionnaire

The experimental design in this thesis made use of a copresence questionnaire originally created by Nowak & Biocca (2003) in order to measure copresence in virtual worlds. The selection of this questionnaire was based on an extensive literature review which established parallels between theatrical presence and mediated copresence (see Chapter 3). In making this selection, I assumed that differences in audience members' experience of the performance would be reflected in their experience of copresence

because of the important role that presence plays for theatrical spectatorship. Given that the questionnaire did not detect differences between the framing conditions while differences were apparent in the interviews must lead us to question the fundamental assumption about theatrical spectatorship that led to the copresence questionnaire being selected in the first place.

At issue is the question of whether or not the copresence questionnaire, as a way of measuring audience involvement, is related closely enough to the effects of audience preparation to be responsive to changes in priming or framing. As Sauter (2002) points out, conducting reception research to determine the elements which influence audience reactions to performances is challenging at the best of times. Methodologically, there are many options, from qualitative or quantitative questionnaires to interviews or even physiological measures of audience reactions (Sauter, 2002). Based on the results of the experimental interviews, most of the differences between conditions emerged when participants were asked to describe their experience in general terms and then allowed to explore their responses in a more flexible way. Given the interview results, it is very possible that this specific questionnaire is not the right measurement tool to understand the impact of changes to framing strategies.

If we want to conduct studies of audience members as a group rather than individually, there are two primary methodological options open to us. The first is to conduct unstructured group interviews, such as the Theatre Talks (Sauter, 2002) in which groups of audience members are encouraged to talk to each other after a performance and their reactions analysed. These conversations would be subsequently coded according to the elements of audience experience that are being sought. The second way of approaching this kind of group experience would be to develop a survey specifically designed to detect the kind of differences caused by framing. Existing surveys tend to survey audience reactions in general ways, making them unlikely to be suitable for this kind of enquiry. Preliminary studies and interviews would need to be conducted in order to determine the questions to ask and the most effective way of getting those answers. The result of such preliminary studies has the potential to lead to the creation of a reception-oriented questionnaire that would be valid across theatrical mediations.

Regardless of which of these solutions are used, it is clear that future research into the impact of framing strategy on theatrical performance is going to need a more focused research tool than the copresence questionnaire used here. Refinements to both the quantitative and qualitative tools being used to understand virtual theatre will increase the reliability and validity of the experimental results.

10.4 Future Research Directions

The methodological choices made in conducting this thesis research were focused on exploring the role of framing techniques in virtual theatre as a form of theatrical mediation. Certain elements of the contributions of this research to our general knowledge of theatrical mediations were restricted because of this decision to limit the scope of the research itself. In spite of those shortcomings, this thesis research can be instrumental in focusing our approaches to future research into framing practices across theatrical mediation.

The preliminary case studies of stage theatre framing techniques in Chapter 6 clearly indicate a need to better understand the strategies used by theatre companies to prepare their audiences. A broader range of case studies, drawn from diverse geographic, economic, and cultural contexts would provide important insights into audience reception studies.

Refinements are also needed to the framing strategies that were tested in the thesis experiment. The next stages of research into virtual theatre needs to include framing strategies drawn from digital media to complement the research here that focused on framing strategies from stage theatre and film. Strategies drawn from video game menu systems, database design and game tutorial levels have a lot of potential relevance to virtual theatre audience and need to be tested in future research.

The data gathering approach in future experiments into theatrical framing techniques is also in need of improvement. The assumption that audience engagement would be tied directly to experiences of copresence has not been borne out by this research. Because of that, additional methods of gathering audience responses need to

be developed, perhaps leading toward the development of a cross-media questionnaire for theatrical reception.

The functional model of framing proposed in Chapter 5 provides an important tool for analysing framing practices across theatrical media. Not only can case studies based on this framework be expanded for stage theatre, as discussed above, but it has great potential to help analyse the creation of social contexts in other media, such as narrative video games, where framing has not been extensively studied. Applying this model of framing to other forms of theatrical mediation would allow for the validation and refinements of its constructs. This, in turn, could lead to the emergence of new forms of audience preparation for various theatrical mediations and change the ways that we think about audience reception in narrative contexts.

This thesis lays the groundwork for an extensive research program into theatrical mediations that will help reconcile theoretical differences between different forms of theatrical mediation. It represents the first step toward understanding theatrical mediations and the ways in which audience experience can be affected by context and pre-show experiences.

Chapter 11. Framing Strategies for Virtual Theatre

Based on the cognitive and strategic models outlined in the previous chapters of this thesis, it is possible to make recommendations for framing effects for virtual theatre performances.

These recommendations are drawn from data gathered from literature reviews as well as the case studies and experimental virtual theatre production of *The Forgotten Sentry*.

Chapter Contents

- 11.1 Online content: websites and publicity
- 11.2 Pre-show Experience
 - 11.2.1 Pre-show experience for web-based virtual theatre
 - 11.2.2 Pre-show experience in virtual worlds
- 11.3 Framing Virtual Theatre

First, this chapter will provide recommendations for the effective design of production websites and advertising that provide audience with different forms of information about the show. These are essential sources of both thematic and content priming, which shape audience expectations before the performance.

Second, the chapter makes recommendations regarding the pre-show experience for virtual theatre audiences. Because there are several central forms of virtual theatre, the recommendations will be separated into two broad categories. The first centres on virtual theatre events which are streamed or otherwise shown within web browsers. The recommendations in these cases will be drawn primarily from techniques used in stage theatre, recorded cinematic narrative and website design. The second section focuses on virtual theatre events that take place in constructed virtual worlds. The recommendations for this type of theatrical mediations are drawn from techniques used in stage theatre, video games and theme park design.

Laying out framing strategies based on coherent research allows us to recommend strategies that can be employed by artists in their own virtual theatre

productions. This opens up many avenues for future research and has the potential to shape and influence the growth of virtual theatre as a form of art and entertainment.

The framing strategies presented in this chapter can also have implications for other forms of theatrical mediation. In those cases, additional research and analysis are required. This research serves to establish a framework for such analysis, and open the door for future research directions.

11.1 Online content: websites and publicity

The first point of contact that audiences will have with a virtual theatre production is its web presence. In chapters 6 and 7, we have seen that this is true of stage theatre and filmed narrative. The networked nature of virtual theatre further suggests that this particular form of theatrical mediation would have an increased reliance on web-based promotion and audience preparation.

This thesis has proposed three different models that virtual theatre productions can follow in strategizing their web presence. The first, modeled on stage theatre productions gives a single production one web page within a larger company website. The second, modeled on film, gives each production its own website, with separate pages for different kinds of content. Some filmed narratives go even further, creating “official” websites for fictional companies or locations from within the narrative content. As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, each of these approaches has its own associated strengths and costs. The selection of specific strategic approaches will depend on the kind of image that the company and production want to project, and the degree to which they want to associate themselves with particular artistic or entertainment aesthetics. It should also be noted that production and financial constraints may limit the choices available to an individual production. The additional cultural value created by website and promotional design is an important consideration for virtual theatre productions.

The analysis of theatrical and cinematic websites in Chapters 5 and 6 shows two very different approaches to this aspect of audience preparation. Theatre websites, such as those of Touchstone Theatre or the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival tend

to use template-driven layout patterns designs to convey information about the productions. These pages primarily use text to convey information with the occasional supporting photo. The content focuses primarily on thematic elements of the production, information about the creators and links to other related work, as can be seen in the analysis of the Touchstone Theatre website contained in Chapter 6. Promotional websites for filmed narratives, on the other hand, are much more graphically intensive, highlighting images rather than text as the primary sources of information. Research on film promotion websites presented in Chapter 7 indicates that the graphical focus is seen as an essential way to excite audiences within a competitive entertainment industry. Virtual theatre producers need to take these differences into account when designing their web presence. If producers are trying to make their production seem more approachable and attract a more mainstream audience, there needs to be a greater focus on the forms of visual communication that audiences associate more readily with entertainment. Given the increasing accessibility of low cost visual editing and web design tools, these more visual approaches to promotion are certainly within the grasp of a wide range of production companies.

The experimental results in Chapter 8 showed very few differences between these two approaches to audience preparation. Respondents in both categories indicated that the websites were effective in preparing them to experience *The Forgotten Sentry*. However, respondents who saw the web page hosted by Pi Theatre were expecting an artistic production, while those who saw theforgottensentry.com were expecting a more entertaining story-driven experience. While both were effective in providing thematic and content priming to audiences, they prepared them for two very different kinds of experience. The decision to use a particular promotional style online acts as a powerful indicator to potential audiences of what the cultural aspect of their experience might be. Because of the cultural associations that audience members may make in relation to a production's online presence, the decision to base web design styles on theatre companies or film promotion is an essential tool for shaping audience experience and expectation.

The decision of whether or not to produce a show trailer is based on similar considerations. Traditionally used for film and video games, trailers are increasingly

becoming used for stage theatre productions, as evidenced by the expansion of trailers available on the PuSh Festival website (see Chapter 6 for details). Since virtual theatre borrows extensively from structural and formal elements of these forms of theatrical mediation, it is likely that a mainstream audience would expect a trailer to advertise the show. While it is common in the entertainment industry, this kind of promotional material is still rare in the arts, and productions with a significant artistic focus can probably promote the performance without them. That being said, the use of video promotional tools is becoming more and more important across theatrical mediations.

The content of the website and trailer allow companies to provide thematic and content priming that will further shape their audience's experience of the production. Priming strategies remain relatively stable across theatrical mediations, allowing for the creation of guidelines for virtual theatre applications. The analysis of framing practices in Chapter 7 showed that stage theatre companies tend to minimize content priming, while more content priming is used in commercial film production. The experiment in Chapter 8 seems to suggest that this shift in strategy didn't have a significant effect on audience experience. The effectiveness of multiple strategic approaches to priming suggests strongly that, while maintaining a cultural context is important, the specific kinds of information presented have a much smaller effect.

As discussed in Chapter 2 and revisited in Chapter 5, the novelty of virtual theatre as a form of theatrical mediation is challenging for audiences. Audiences need to feel like they have a reasonable idea of what will happen during a performance in order to decrease the barriers to attendance inherent in new forms of narrative expression. A detailed approach to thematic priming (perhaps accompanied by stories which adhere more closely to genre conventions) will allow audiences to recognize important narrative details and create a sense of familiarity. This can allow audiences to approach works of virtual theatre with greater confidence, making their experience more pleasant.

Virtual theatre companies can also build community and a sense of anticipation among audience members through the use of social media. The inconsistency in social media strategy uncovered in our case studies of theatre companies in Chapter 6 shows that this is another area that requires additional research. All of the interviewees agreed

that social media is very important for creating and maintaining audiences, but the specific strategies that would be effective are not yet established. For a new form of theatrical mediation such as virtual theatre, social media can allow audience members to get a sense of a larger group, creating a sense of community where one does not yet exist. This sense of widening the community may help further reinforce the cultural value of the work being produced. Unfortunately, while the importance of social media is clear, specific strategic recommendations remain elusive at this time.

As the interviews outlined in Chapter 8 show, stage theatre companies see online materials primarily as a way of attracting audiences and convincing them to buy tickets to see a production. However, the cognitive explorations of spectatorship outlined in Chapters 3 and 5 show us that they are also among the most important source of both content and thematic priming. In addition, they provide cultural and social context for the performance, adding to its perceived value for audiences. Care must be taken in the design of online materials to provide the right amount and kind of information provided to audiences to enhance their experiences.

11.2 Pre-show Experience

While most productions have some kind of web presence, many opportunities to create effective framing go unused. Not only can the pre-show experience leverage priming effects to prepare audiences to experience the narrative, but they also establish the behavioural and social contexts that are essential to audience experience. While they may not provide significant differences for audience experience of performer copresence, they do reinforce the communal and live nature of virtual theatre performances.

Certain aspects of theatrical and cinematic pre-show experience are relevant to virtual theatre, but its lack of physical location and its digital format leads make other digital forms of theatrical mediation more relevant. In particular, pre-show strategies used to prepare audiences for online video and video games are very relevant to virtual theatre. A lot can be learned from theme park pre-ride strategies for virtual theatre performances using virtual worlds (as they are for video game development).

There are enough differences between different forms of virtual theatre that we need to distinguish between two artistic and technical approaches at this stage. On one hand, many virtual theatre performances are web-based, taking place in chat rooms or videoconferencing windows hosted within websites. These performances will need to use different tools than those which use virtual worlds as their platform of choice. On the other hand, many virtual theatre performances take place in virtual worlds, whether through platforms such as Second Life or multi-user game environments.

11.2.1 Pre-show experience for web-based virtual theatre

Historically, many web-based virtual theatre performances take place in chat rooms; the performances of Avatar Body Collision or Desktop Theatre made use of The Palace, a 2D graphical chat interface. More recently, the tools for graphical chatroom performances have expanded significantly with the introduction of platforms specifically designed for live online performance. These productions use live communications platforms embedded within websites, making their construction of pre-show experiences significantly different from what would be productive in virtual worlds. To this point, few virtual theatre productions using web-based platforms have paid much attention to the audience's pre-show experience, making this a significant avenue of exploration and expansion of virtual theatre practice.

Typically, the pre-show experience for audience members for this type of virtual theatre production would be contained on the single web page where the performance will be displayed. This limits the approach of the producers, making careful choices of audience preparation strategies very important.

11.2.1.1 Framing the performance space

Web-based design elements are the strongest means that online virtual theatre performances have to contextualize the performance space. Specifically, the spaces around the performance window which are currently largely unused are potentially important spaces to be used for framing strategies. The extra-theatrical space on the web page can be used to present both thematic and content priming, as well as to establish the cultural capital of the work. As such, extra-theatrical framing strategies from

both stage theatre and film are important influences on what is possible for virtual theatre in this context. Of particular importance are strategies drawn from the design of web pages for the online streaming of video narrative. The established strategies from these theatrical mediations help establish the spectatorial context and bring audiences into the virtual theatre performance.

The screen space around the performance area is an important, if underutilized, element of the presentation of web-based virtual theatre events. Generally speaking, for UpStage and Water Wheel, the web pages on which the performances appear are blank white or grey spaces without text or other indications as to the nature of the event. This is in stark contrast to the websites of television shows which stream episodes online, as analysed in Chapter 7. These television websites provide an effective template for what can be accomplished through the use of the screen space which frames the narrative window. Most of these websites have banners above and beside the screening area with the show title and images from the show. These help to contextualize the video and remind viewers about the show as it loads and during commercials. Below the video space, there is frequently a short text synopsis of the episode and links to other online content related to the show (videos, pictures or articles). These streaming websites provide important cues as to the possibilities available for web-based virtual theatre performances.

By including graphical information about the show around the performance space itself, it is possible to include thematic and content priming on the screen during the performance. Producers can elect to use either screenshots of the event itself or thematically linked external materials to help create a visual frame within which the performance can take place. Because priming effects have been shown not to have a long duration, providing materials on the performance page itself allows audiences to see them immediately before and during the event, adding to their effectiveness. Since artistically-oriented theatrical mediations tend toward thematic rather than content priming, a more indirect approach would seem to be called for in artistic contexts. Web-streamed television shows are particularly likely to use images of the main characters in thematically relevant situations. Only very rarely will these images have anything to do with the narrative of particular episodes. Because of differences in the availability of

contextual information these images serve as thematic priming to those unfamiliar with the series, while acting as direct content priming for those who already know the show. The relative value of using thematic or content-based images in this way is hard to determine, and additional experimentation would be required to find the best strategies for certain types of web-based virtual theatre productions.

The textual descriptions of the episode content which frequently appear below the video frame provide priming information to audiences and are very easy to implement for virtual theatre productions. As with the visual frame, it would seem logical that more artistically oriented virtual theatre productions would tend toward more thematic information while entertainment-oriented productions' descriptions may emphasise narrative elements more directly. Strategic considerations should be drawn from the desired audience experience for the virtual theatre event. The balance of these two considerations aside, a short textual description of a production presented alongside the event itself is potentially a very powerful tool for shaping audience reaction to the narrative.

The multiple pages and links which make up a typical website for streamed television content online are much more time consuming and expensive to produce and thus outside of the scope of most virtual theatre productions. If used in the right ways, however, these links can provide a wealth of connected narrative information that allow for the narrative to extend beyond the performance itself. Using links to other material, virtual theatre productions can leverage the inherently multimodal and hypermediated nature of online communication. Narrative information can be provided through constructed websites, pre-recorded video or social media accounts for the characters in the event itself. The possibilities for this kind of extended artistic expression are vast, and have significant potential for further hybridising virtual theatre and extending its creative vocabulary.

By creating a coherent visual and textual frame to help contextualize the virtual theatre production, creators can provide important thematic and content priming to audiences. These strategies are already widely implemented in streaming websites for television shows, another important form of theatrical mediation. Because of this wide

availability, audiences will have a great deal of familiarity with these strategies of presenting priming information. This makes the priming even more accessible for audiences, thereby increasing its effectiveness. Virtual theatre productions can implement these strategies based on their desired audience experience, but significantly more research and experimentation will be required to truly evaluate the effectiveness of these framing strategies.

11.2.1.2 Presentation of the performance space

The presentation of the performance space is a key element of audience preparation. For online virtual theatre production, techniques are most productively drawn from stage theatre productions. After audience members enter the theatre, they are slowly introduced to the performance space. Pre-show music helps set the stage, and the set is often visible (though often dimly and dramatically lit). This gives stage theatre audiences a chance to observe the narrative space and use that time to understand the semiotic and practical elements which are present in the design. Similar approaches could be adapted to online virtual theatre performances in order to create similar anticipation among audiences. Select strategies, for example the use of title sequences to introduce the narrative, could also be drawn from television and film. In this context, we will also briefly consider the use of advertising preceding both television and film events as a way of funding those types of theatrical narrative.

For a virtual theatre production, stage theatre practices of presenting the stage space to audiences before the beginning of the performance could be adapted in several different ways. One way to create an online equivalent to the stage theatre convention would be to use the narrative space itself to convey information before the performance itself begins. For example, still images related to the themes of the performance could be presented to reinforce thematic priming elements present in previous materials. These pre-show images could easily be automated to change. Beyond allowing the display of several images, montage editing techniques could be used to create new contexts and meaning for series of images through juxtaposition. Alternately, images of the setting of the performance could be displayed, literally mirroring the techniques used in stage theatre productions and allowing audiences to see the setting of the performance before it happens. Because many web-based performances use

photographic backdrops as their main set elements, in many cases, these two approaches may be interchangeable.

The presentation of narratively salient material in the portion of the screen set aside to be the performance space impacts audiences in two ways. First, it helps reinforce the thematic and content priming that was contained in publicity materials. Showing audiences these materials, helps call to mind the aspects of the narrative that the director wants the audience to focus on, shaping their experience of the performance. Second, it helps establish that screen element as the site of narrative information, establishing the frame within which the performance will unfold. This helps focus audience attention and reinforce the importance of the performance space much in the same way that theatrical lighting or seating arrangements set the stage apart as being more narratively salient than audience spaces. The degree to which a section of the screen can be reinforced and presented as important may influence spectators' willingness to maintain attention on those elements.

The outcomes associated with the addition of thematic and content information as part of the pre-show experience are potentially very strong. Because these approaches to web-based virtual theatre presentation have not yet been tried, they also represent an important avenue of both artistic and academic inquiry. Additional information is required to be able to fully assess these framing strategies and the impact that they have on audiences.

Cinematic strategies employed in both television and commercial film distribution may also provide strategic options for web-based virtual theatre. Film and television narratives typically begin with a title sequence which signals to audiences that the performance itself is beginning. Television broadcasts also frequently use an abbreviated version of this title sequence when coming back from commercial breaks, again as a way of signalling the beginning of the narrative event. In addition to acting as a cognitive trigger, these title sequences provide additional thematic and content priming just as the event begins.

The use of on-screen graphical animation, text and music to introduce a web-based virtual theatre event has a lot of potential. Current platforms such as UpStage and

Water Wheel both support this kind of introductory sequence. We made use of this capacity in our 2010 production, *Murder 2.0*. When audiences arrived at the website, they saw the title of the performance with the skyline of the city. To signify the beginning of the performance, the audience view panned across the city until it arrived at the office of the detective who was the protagonist of the story. The animation was accompanied by music composed for the production. This title sequence allowed us to reinforce the genre of the event as well as introducing the comic book-inspired artistic style we chose for the story. Leveraging the animation ability of web-based virtual theatre performances takes significantly more technical expertise than simply using still images. But this more complex approach to presenting and triggering the theatrical event online can potentially bridge the gap between it and more widely popular forms of theatrical mediation.

It also may be possible to use the pre-show performance space for revenue generation. Both movie theatres and televised distribution of recorded video narratives use the screen space for advertising purposes before the performance. While this situation is less artistically interesting, it represents an opportunity to monetize or otherwise recognize the contribution of sponsors to the performance itself. This raises issues of the commercialization of art and the importance of the financial side of the production process. Some may see this as selling out, but the ability to monetize virtual theatre performances either through ticket sales or advertising is an important step in the gradual professionalization of virtual theatre production.

The ability to professionalize and expand the artistic and entertainment value of productions is important to the future development of the form. Beyond grant applications, the monetization of artistic experiences, whether through ticket sales, merchandise or advertising is important. The use of this pre-show space to acknowledge sponsors allows for the beginnings of this professionalization. But it also opens the door to audiences to become disillusioned with the artwork if it becomes perceived as selling out or otherwise impure as a result of its use of advertising. This unease with the monetary side of artistic production and consumption is found across artistic disciplines, and is certainly something that virtual theatre will have to come to terms with in the future.

The research presented in this dissertation makes it clear that more attention needs to be paid to the pre-show presentation of the online performance space. There is still a lot of research and experimentation that needs to be done in order to establish aesthetic and theatrical conventions of virtual theatre spectatorship. An increased attention to the presentation of the performance space as part of the pre-show experience will allow for an expansion of artistic practice and our understanding of the spectatorial experience in virtual theatre.

11.2.2 Pre-show experience in virtual worlds

Many virtual theatre performances make use of virtual worlds as the platforms for their performances. Some groups (such as the Super Art League) make use of multi-user video games to create performances, while others (such as Second Front or Ballet Pixelle) make use of more customizable virtual worlds such as Second Life. In each case, performers and audience members log into the virtual platform and share the virtual space for the duration of the performance itself. The way in which users are introduced to that virtual space is an important consideration for artists producing any sort of art in these settings.

The situation is very limited for artists creating in more constrained virtual worlds such as multi-user computer games. In those virtual worlds, individual creators have very little control over the details of the virtual setting. In those cases, the most that can be done in terms of spatial design is to carefully select a pre-existing setting for the performance. Usually, these settings are chosen for their symbolic value for the performance (for instance, the use of the Metropolis Central Bank as the staging point for a super hero occupy protest) rather than their ability to frame a performance for the audience. In those cases, there are not many ways to control the pre-show experience, so I will leave those events to the side for now, focusing instead on those virtual worlds in which the creator has more significant input into the design of the virtual space.

For those virtual theatre performances using modifiable virtual worlds, there are a number of different strategies that can be employed. One approach would be to borrow directly from established forms of public theatrical mediation such as stage theatres or

public movie theatres. A second would borrow elements of spatial design as they are implemented in other forms of narrative construction such as theme parks. These two approaches provide different approaches and strategies which would be able to help refine our approach to framing virtual theatre performances.

As with web-based performance, analysis of strategic considerations will be divided into two sections. The first will look at the audience experience before arriving in the performance space proper, suggesting ways in which the event might be framed in the virtual space itself. The second section will analyse the performance space itself and the ways in which virtual theatre can use spatial design to direct attention and audience focus both before and during the event.

11.2.2.1 Framing the performance space

While many performances in virtual worlds simply introduce their audiences into the performance space, there have been some notable efforts at framing strategies directed at audiences. Those virtual theatre productions which design extra-theatrical spaces draw their inspiration primarily from lobby designs for traditional stage theatre, and we will be exploring the framing possibilities of these approaches first. Our research suggests, however, that strategies drawn from other traditions of spatial design may be more effective and provide additional tools to creators.

The earliest virtual theatre performances in virtual worlds took place in the text-only performance platform contained within ATHEMOO. This virtual theatre venue was constructed as a textual equivalent of a stage theatre. The textual descriptions of the theatre space included a doorman to check tickets, and a lobby where audience members congregated to chat before the performance. The construction of the virtual space thus mirrored the audience the audience experience from stage theatre as closely as possible. Given that the space was hosted by the American Association for Theatre in Higher Education, this reflection of theatrical practices is not surprising. By using familiar conventions of audience behaviour, organizers hoped to lower the barriers for spectatorship in virtual theatre performances by taking advantage of their audience's known familiarity with stage theatre spectatorship.

Some existing performance venues in Second Life already leverage familiarity with theatre in their framing strategy. Of particular note in this regard is the Second Life Globe Theatre used by the Second Life Shakespeare Company between 2007 and 2009 (SL Shakespeare Company, 2009). Their performance space was a replica of the Globe Theatre in London that was programmed to allow for theatre-like functionality in its staging and audience management (SL Shakespeare Company, 2009). By using a replica of Shakespeare's famous theatre to produce excerpts from his plays, the SL Shakespeare Company was able to leverage not only audience members' behavioural scripts around spectatorship, but also provide thematic priming information to audiences based on their expectations of Shakespearean performance.

While most virtual theatre production companies do not have as narrow a focus on one author, the design choices of ATHEMOO and the SL Shakespeare Company remain important precedents. By using their audience's familiarity with stage theatre, these companies were able to create an audience environment which encouraged adherence to the behavioural scripts established by stage theatre spectatorship. The fact that the spectatorial conventions of public film screenings are very similar to those of stage theatre further reinforces these behaviours. Our interview feedback from *The Forgotten Sentry* indicates that familiarity with audience expectations from theatre and film had an impact for audiences, reinforcing the idea that the social scripts associated with these forms of theatrical mediation can be leveraged for the pre-show experience in virtual theatre as well.

Maintaining established behavioural cues through the design of extra-theatrical spaces in virtual worlds is an important strategy for virtual theatre productions taking place in virtual worlds. The most effective strategy for achieving this in *The Forgotten Sentry* was to design the audience seating area to resemble that of a stage theatre or movie theatre. The only interview participant not to have experience with media art, 18B3006, identified this seating pattern specifically as one of the elements which helped them know what to expect from the event. This familiarity provides reference points to new audience members, making it much easier for them to enjoy the performance.

Our experiment in framing *The Forgotten Sentry* did not have any significant findings when it came to the usefulness of the lobby spaces that we created. Given the importance of lobby design in the literature presented in Chapter 5, it seems likely that our design choices were ineffective rather than lobby design in general not having any effect in virtual worlds. In addition to the option above (re-creating stage theatre lobby spaces), a compelling model of pre-show experience can be found in Henry Jenkins's proposal for virtual world design: taking inspiration from the design of theme parks.

A more complete analysis of the possibilities of theme park design can be found in Chapters 5 and 7 of this thesis, but for the most part, this design strategy revolves around the inclusion of strategic narrative elements in the spatial design itself. An informal evaluation of theme park design reveals two different approaches to designing lineups for rides in theme parks. The first involves the use of thematic elements related to the IP that the ride is based on, including structural, visual and audio elements. The second approach creates a narrative arc as part of the lineup experience, using film, projection, spatial design and props to create a narrative framework for the ride. Following the cognitive priming theory, each of these two approaches could be expected to have slightly different outcomes for audiences.

The first example of theme park lineup design focuses primarily on thematic priming to prepare audiences for the ride. The use of characters from films establishes a context of familiarity with the audience without divulging any information about the narrative of the experience that is to follow. Most visitors are already familiar with the intellectual property being exploited for the ride, and this strategy leverages that familiarity, using cues to prime audience members' existing ideas about the characters and situations they might find themselves in. The narrative of the ride then presents a scenario where the audience might reasonably be expected to accompany one of the established characters in some exciting experience. Both major and minor characters make appearances in the lineup and ride experiences, and the continuity of the narrative context (rather than the narrative experience) serves as a through line for the experience as a whole.

The second strategy used in them park lineups is to gradually introduce narrative elements to create a narrative arc that is experienced during the wait for the ride itself. These rides do make use of thematic priming, but focus most of their energy on content priming related to the narrative of the ride itself. Lineup designs that follow this pattern typically break down the waiting process into between 4 and 6 distinct phases. The narrative intensity builds with each phase, reaching its climax at the end of the final phase, just as the ride begins. The goal of this seems to be to increase the excitement of the ride experience by presenting all necessary exposition before the ride itself begins. In this form of narrative construction, the ride itself represents the climax of a wider narrative arc, allowing the ride portion to dispense with the exposition phase and become more intense and exciting. This lineup design strategy allows for the presentation of a more elaborate narrative by distributing the narrative event across several different presentational forms.

Both of these approaches could be easily implemented in custom designed virtual worlds such as second life. Audience members would be given a location in the virtual space that would force them to go through a particular area before arriving at the performance venue itself. Indications of thematic and content priming can be designed into the virtual path that audience members must take in order to experience the event. The decision to focus on thematic or content priming in these preparatory experiences will depend both on the aesthetic goals of the production as well as the resources available to the creators. An aesthetic consideration may relate to the relative abstraction and the importance of linear narrative – performances that are less concerned with having an Aristotelian narrative structure may be more suited to using thematic rather than content priming. We must also consider the additional costs involved with creating introductory narratives and the increased production time that would be required to put together a coherent narrative experience as part of the preparations for the performance.

While this approach to the creation of extra-theatrical spaces in virtual worlds takes more time, it has the benefit of being directly related to the performance that will take place. Rather than preparing audiences for the act of spectatorship in general (as the lobby spaces of ATHEMOO and The SL Shakespeare company do), audiences are

brought into the specific world of the narrative in preparation for the event itself. As pointed out in Chapter 5, while this approach to audience preparation is not used for filmed narrative, it is not unheard of in stage theatre productions, and is one of the dominant modes of audience introduction in narrative video games. This strategy for drawing audience members into the fictional world can thus draw on the ways in which the construction of pre-show narrative spaces occurs across a variety of theatrical mediations.

Extra-theatrical framing strategies in virtual theatre presentations in virtual worlds need to accomplish two things: create triggering conditions for the behavioural strategies of spectatorship and prime audiences appropriately to deepen their understanding of the event. The experiment surrounding *The Forgotten Sentry* suggests strongly that audience seating patterns act as behavioural triggers, letting audience members know they are participating in a theatrical event. Creating appropriate extra-theatrical priming strategies is somewhat more complex, although adaptations of stage theatre and theme park strategies have some potential in the construction of virtual performance spaces. In either case, the design of the extra-theatrical virtual space and soundscape plays an important role in shaping audience experience in virtual worlds.

11.3 Framing Virtual Theatre

This thesis provides the basis for a sustained and rigorous analytical and strategic approach to framing virtual theatre events. As the literature-based theatrical mediations model suggests, the approach to framing designed here for virtual theatre can also be applied directly to other forms of mediation. For artists creating theatrical narratives, thinking about framing can be an important addition to their process. To think about extra-theatrical elements as part of the creative process shifts the focus onto audience experience. It forces creators to address the question of what kind of event they are trying to create and how they might reinforce their creative message by extending their creative process beyond the confines of the performance itself.

The primary tool designed in this thesis for improving framing outcomes is the functional model of theatrical framing presented in Chapter 5. This robust model of

framing provides the necessary tools to not only analyse and understand existing framing practices, but also to guide the formulation of robust audience preparation strategies.

By placing virtual theatre as one among many theatrical mediations, tools and analysis can be brought to bear from a wide range of research areas. The creation of a theoretical model of framing clearly illustrates the potential and importance of this cross-disciplinary research model. This emerging theory is consistent with existing theories from media studies and theatre studies, using a cognitive lens to show the common ground between these disciplines. Not only does the outcome of this research clearly illustrate the relevance of media theory to theatrical analysis, but it also opens the door to applying theatrical concepts to media studies in the future.

Many of the recommendations here also focus on creating a spectatorial environment which is welcoming to audiences who have not experienced a virtual theatre performance before. By adopting the framing techniques of related theatrical mediations, we can help reduce the barriers to attendance which face many virtual theatre productions. This model was tested in both an evaluative and generative context within this thesis. Limitations in the scope of the thesis open the door to additional testing and refinement of this theoretical model in subsequent research studies. The exploratory research into framing for audience preparation in theatrical mediations provides a firm foundation for conducting such future research.

On a more personal level, this research will have significant implications for my own artistic practice. First, this research reminds me that when creating narrative experiences, whether live or recorded, the audience experience starts well before they see the first designed element of narrative. Creating a more complete audience experience begins with establishing the conditions in which the narrative creation will be understood. Second, this research clearly highlights the complexity of audience reception and the relevance of other forms of user experience and interaction design to artistic processes. There are many lessons from digital design fields that have not yet been applied to artistic productions, and this provides a clear path for future artistic exploration.

This thesis began with a very restrictive and focused definition of virtual theatre, so it seems only fitting to end the thesis by extending it beyond the narrow confines of its scope. While the research contained here was carefully focused on one small corner of the wider field of digital performance, its findings are intended to be generalizable across different forms of theatrical mediation. Applying the theoretical constructs developed here to other media will take additional experimentation and research, but it can help shape the emergence of new forms of theatrical expression. Artistic practice at the intersection of theatrical expression and digital media is growing rapidly, and the importance of understanding them as complete audience experiences is vital to the future theorization of this form. Hopefully, this thesis provides researchers with a small yet important step in that direction.

References

- Acland, C. R. (2003). *Screen Traffic: Movies, Multiplexes and Global Culture*. Durham; Duke University Press.
- Adamo, A., Bertacchini, P. A., Bilotta, E., Pantano, P., & Tavernise, A. (2010). Connecting Art and Science for Education: Learning through an Advanced Virtual Theater with "Talking Heads". *Leonardo Journal*, 43(5).
- Ameri, A. H. (2015). *The Architecture of the Illusive Distance*. Burlington, VT : Ashgate.
- Auslander, P. (2008). *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture, 2nd Edition*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Bailenson, J. N. (2006). Transformed social interaction in collaborative virtual environments. In P. Messaris & L. Humphreys (Eds.), *Digital media: Transformations in human communication* (pp 255-264). New York: Peter Lang.
- Bailenson, J. N., Beall, A. C., Blascovich, J., Loomis, J., & Turk, M. (2005). Transformed social interaction, augmented gaze, and social influence in immersive virtual environments. *Human Communication Research*, 31, 511-537.
- Bailenson, J. N., Yee, N., Merget, D., & Schroeder, R. (2006). The effect of behavioral realism and form realism of real-time avatar faces on verbal disclosure, nonverbal disclosure, emotion recognition, and copresence in dyadic interaction. *PRESENCE: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*, 15, 359-372.
- Bal, M. (1982). Mimesis and Genre Theory in Aristotle's Poetics: La poétique by Aristote: Roselyne Dupont-Roc; Jean Lallot. *Poetics Today*, 3(1), 171-180.
- Barber, S. (2010). *Abandoned Images: Film and Film's End*. London, Reaktion Books.
- Barker, M. (2013). *Live to your local cinema: The Remarkable rise of livecasting*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Barker, R. G. (1968). *Ecological psychology: Concepts and Methods for Studying the Environment of Human Behavior*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.
- Bazin, A. (2009). *What is Cinema?* Trans. T. Barnard. Montreal: Caboose.
- Benjamin, W. (1986 [1936]). The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction in Hanhardt, J. G. (ed.), *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press.

- Bennett, S. (1998). *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception*. London & NY: Routledge.
- Biocca, F. (2001). Inserting the Presence of Mind into a Philosophy of Presence: A Response to Sheridan and Mantovani and Riva. *Presence - Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*, 10(5). 546-556.
- Biocca, F. (2003, May). *Can we resolve the book, the physical reality, and the dream state problem? From the two-pole to a three-pole mode of shifts in presence*. Paper presented at the EU Future and Emerging Technologies, Presence initiative meeting, Venice.
- Bizzocchi, J. (2007). Games and Narrative: An Analytical Framework. *Loading...*, 1(1), 1-10.
- Blau, H. (1990). *The Audience*. Baltimore & London: John Hopkins U Press.
- Bolter, J. D., & Grusin, R. (1999). *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press.
- Bolton, C. (2002). From Wooden Cyborgs to Celluloid Souls: Mechanical Bodies in Anime and Japanese Puppet Theater. *positions*. 10(3), 729-771.
- Bordwell, D. (1989). *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP.
- Bouissac P. (1987). The marketing of performance. In Umiker-Sebeok J (ed.), *Marketing and Semiotics: New Directions in the Study of Signs for Sale*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. pp. 391–406
- Bracken, C. C. & Botta, R. A. (2010). Telepresence and television. In C. C. Bracken & P. D. Skalski (Eds.), *Immersed in Media: Telepresence in Everyday Life*. London & NY: Routledge. 39-62.
- Byrne, E. (2005). *Game level design*. Hingham, MA: Charles River Media.
- Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (2002). CAB Code of Ethics. Retrieved from <http://www.cbsc.ca/english/codes/cabethics.php>
- Carroll, N. (2006). Philosophy and drama : performance, interpretation, and intentionality in Krasner, D (Ed.), *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theater, Performance, and Philosophy* (pp. 104-121). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Causey, M. (2007). *Theatre and performance in digital culture: from simulation to embeddedness*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Chatzichristodoulou, M. (2012). Cyberformance? Digital or Networked Performance? Cybertheaters? Or Virtual Theatres?... or all of the above? In Abrahams, A. & Jamieson, H. V., eds. *Cyposium: The Book*. Link Editions. pp. 19-30.

- Clark, B. B. (2005). Putul Yatra: A Celebration of Indian Puppetry. *Asian Theatre Journal*, 22(2), 334–347. doi:10.1353/atj.2005.0018
- Conner, S. (2014, Nov 20). Actress becomes well-versed in portraying grieving moms. *The Vancouver Sun*. Retrieved from <http://vancouver.sun.com/>
- Copeland, R. (1990). The Presence of Mediation. *TDR*, 34(4), 28–44. doi:10.2307/1146042
- Crawford, C. (2005). *Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling*. Berkeley, CA: New Riders.
- Crisell, A. (2012). *Liveness & Recording in the Media*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Cull, L. (2012). *Theatres of immanence Deleuze and the ethics of performance*. Houndmills, Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Danet, B. (2001). *Cyberpl@y: Communicating online*. Berg Publishers.
- Davide, F. & Walker, R. (2003). Engineering Presence: an Experimental Strategy. In G. Riva, F. Davide & W. A. IJsselsteijn (Eds.), *Being there: concepts, effects and measurements of user presence in synthetic environments*, (pp. 41-57). Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- Delappe, J. (2011). *dead-in-iraq*. Retrieved from <http://www.delappe.net/project/dead-in-iraq/>
- Derrida, J. (1967/1978). *Writing and Difference*. Chicago: U of Chicago Press.
- Dixon, S. (2007). *Digital performance: a history of new media in theater, dance, performance art, and installation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT press.
- Drake, P. (2006). Reconceptualizing Screen Performance. *Journal of Film and Video*, 58(1/2), pp. 84-94.
- Eco, U. (1977). Semiotics of Theatrical Performance. *The Drama Review*, 21(1), 107-117.
- Egenfeldt-Nielsen, S., Smith, J. H. & Tosca, S. P. (2008). *Understanding Video Games: The Essential Introduction*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Elam, K. (1980). *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Erickson, J. (2006). Presence. In Krasner, D (Ed.), *Staging Philosophy: Intersections of Theater, Performance, and Philosophy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 142-159.
- Eskelinen, M. (2004). Towards Computer Game Studies. In Wardrip-Fruin, N. & Harrigan, P. (eds.) *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance and Game* (pp. 36-44). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Esslin, M. (1982). The Stage: Reality, Symbol, Metaphor. In J. Redmond (Ed.) *Themes in Drama 4: Drama and Symbolism* (pp. 1-12). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Esslin, M. (1991). *The Field of Drama: How the Signs of Drama Create Meaning on Stage and Screen*. London: Methuen.
- Fauconnier, G. & Turner, M. (2002). *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Feral, J. (2002). Theatricality: The Specificity of Theatrical Language. *SubStance* 31(2/3) 94-108).
- Feral, J. (2012). How to define presence effects: the work of Janet Cardiff. In G. Giannachi, N. Kaye & M. Shanks (Eds.) *Archaeologies of Presence: Art Performance and the Persistence of Being* (pp. 29-49). London & New York: Routledge.
- Francis, P. (2012). *Puppetry: A Reader in Theatre Practice*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Fuks, S. (2016). *Waterwheel: an interactive platform exploring water as topic and metaphor*. Retrieved from: <http://water-wheel.net/>
- Gadamer, H.-G. (1980). *Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato* (P. C. Smith, trans.). New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Garau, M. (2003). The Impact of Avatar Fidelity on Social Interaction in Virtual Environments (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of London, London.
- Garner, S. B. (1994). *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*. Ithaca & London: Cornell UP.
- Gee, D. (2014, Nov 19). Play explores tragedy through parents theatre. *The Province*. Retrieved from <http://theprovince.com/>
- Gee, J. P. (2005). Learning by Design: good video games as learning machines. *E-learning*, 2(1), 5-16.
- Giannachi, G. (2004). *Virtual theatres: an introduction*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: an essay on the organization of experience*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Gray, J. A. (2010). *Show sold separately: promos, spoilers and other media paratexts*. New York: New York UP.

- Gumbrecht, H. U. & Marrinan, M. (Eds.) (2003). *Mapping Benjamin: The Work of Art in the Digital Age*. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP.
- Hall, E. (1966). *The Hidden Dimension*. New York: Doubleday.
- Hartman, T., Klimmt, C. & Vorderer, P. (2010). Telepresence and Media Entertainment. In C. C. Bracken & P. D. Skalski (Eds.), *Immersed in Media: Telepresence in Everyday Life*. London & NY: Routledge. 137-157.
- Hassoun, D. (2016). Engaging Distractions: Regulating Second-Screen Use in the Theater. *Cinema Journal*, 55(2), 89-111.
- Hedling, E. (2006). Framing Tolkien: Trailers, High Concept and the Ring. In E. Mathijs (Ed.) *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*. London & NY: Wallflower Press. 225-237.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time*. J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, trans. New York: Harper & Row.
- Herrera, G., Jordan, R. & Vera, L. (2006). Agency and Presence: A Common Dependence on Subjectivity? *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments* 15(5), pp. 539–552
- Howard, V. A. (2008). *Charm and Speed: Virtuosity in the Performing Arts*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Howell, A. (1998). *The analysis of performance art: a guide to its theory and practice*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers
- Ignatio, D. (2013). Crafting Destruction: The Evolution of the Dead Space User Interface. Retrieved from: <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1017723/Crafting-Destruction-The-Evolution-of>
- Ijsselsteijn, W. A. (2003). Presence in the past: what can we learn from media history? In G. Riva, F. Davide & W. A. IJsselsteijn (Eds.), *Being there: concepts, effects and measurements of user presence in synthetic environments*, (pp. 17-38). Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- Ijsselsteijn, W. A. (2005). Towards a neuropsychological basis of presence. *Annual Review of CyberTherapy and Telemedicine: A Decade of VR*, 3, 25-30.
- Ijsselsteijn, W. A., de Ridder, H., Freeman, J. & Avons, S. E. (2000). Presence: concept, determinants, and measurement. *Human Vision and Electronic Imaging*, 5, p. 520. doi:10.1117/12.387188.
- Inside the Magic (2012, May 12). *Transformers: The Ride 3D ride & queue experience at Universal Studios Hollywood [1080P HD]* [Video File]. Retrieved from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARJHpBgu1vM>

- Jamieson, H. V. & Smith, V. (2013) UpStage: An Online Tool for Real-Time Storytelling. In Z. Pan et al. (Eds.): *Transactions on Edutainment X*. pp. 146–160, 2013.
- Jamieson, H. V. (2008). *Adventures in Cyberformance: experiments at the interface of theatre and the internet*. Queensland University of Technology, December 2008.
- Jancovich, M. & Faire, L. (2003). *The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption*. London: BFI Publishing.
- Janiszewski, C. & Wyer, R. S., Jr. (2014). Concept and process priming: A review. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 24 (1), 96-118.
- Janovich, M. & Faire, L. (2003). *The place of the audience: Cultural geographies of film consumption*. London: BFI Publishing.
- Jenik, A. (2001). Desktop Theater: Keyboard Catharsis and the Masking of Roundheads. *The Drama Review*. 45(3), 95-112.
- Jenkins, H. (2004). Game Design as Narrative Architecture. In Wardrip-Fruin, N. & Harrigan, P. (eds.) *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance and Game* (pp. 118-130). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Jensen, C. S. (2014). Reduced Narration, Intensified Emotion: The Film Trailer. *Projections*, 8(1), 105-125.
- Jones, M. T. (2008). An Experiment on Cognitive Priming and the Book Problem in Narrative Media. In A. Spagnolli & L. Gamberini (Eds.) *Proceedings of the 11th Annual International Workshop on Presence*. Padova: International Society for Presence Research. 27-37.
- Juul, J. (2005) *Half-real : video games between real rules and fictional worlds*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Kaprow, A. (2003). *Essays on the Blurring of Art and Life, Expanded Edition*. Berkeley, CA: U of California Press.
- Kernan, L. (2004). *Coming Attractions: Reading American Movie Trailers*. Austin: U of Texas Press.
- Koku, P. S. (1995). On bizarreness in the entertainment industry. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 9(4), p. 19-30.
- Kwon, H.-J. (2011). Maeterlinck et le théâtre pour marionnettes: Alladine et Palomides, Intérieur, La mort de Tintagiles. *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, 40 (1 & 2), pp. 127-150.
- Lederman, M. (2014, December 19). The man behind Music on Main. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/>

- Leroux, L. P. & Baston, C. R. (eds.) (2016). *Cirque global: Quebec's expanding circus boundaries*. Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP.
- Lessiter, J., Freeman, J., Keogh, E., & Davidoff, J. (2001). A cross-media presence questionnaire: The ITC-Sense of Presence Inventory. *Presence: Teleoperators & Virtual Environments*, 10(3), 282–297.
- Loiselle, A. & Maron, J. (2012). Introduction. In Loiselle, A. & Maron, J. (Eds.) *Stages of Reality : Theatricality in Cinema*. Toronto : U of Toronto Press. 3-10.
- Lombard, M., & Ditton, T. (1997). At the heart of it all: The concept of presence. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 3(2).
- Lombard, M., Ditton, T., Crane, D., Davis, B., Gil-Egui, G., Horvath, K. & Rossman, J. (2000). Measuring Presence : A Literature-Based Approach to the Development of a Standardized Paper-and-Pencil Instrument. Presented at Presence, 2000, the 3rd Annual International Workshop on Presence. Retrieved from: <http://ispr.info/presence-conferences/previous-conferences/presence-2000/>
- Machon, J. (2013). *Immersive Theatres; Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Manovich, L. (2002). *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Marich, R. (2013). *Marketing to moviegoers: a handbook of strategies and tactics*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP.
- Marriott, S. (2007). *Live Television: Time, Space and the Broadcast Event*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Mateas, M. & Sengers, P. (2002). Narrative Intelligence. In *Narrative intelligence*, (M. Mateas & P. Sengers, Eds. Amsterdam ; Philadelphia, PA : J. Benjamins Pub. Pp. 9-34.
- Mathijs, E. & Sexton, J. (2011). *Cult Cinema: An Introduction*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Mattes, E. & Mattes, F. (2010). *No Fun (2010)*. Retrieved from: <http://0100101110101101.org/no-fun/>
- McConachie, B. & Hart, F. E., Eds. (2006). *Performance and Cognition : Theatre studies and the cognitive turn*. New York & London: Routledge.
- McConachie, B. (2008). *Engaging audiences: a cognitive approach to spectating in the theatre*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- McConachie, B. (2013). *Theatre & Mind*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- McElhinney, E. (2010, December 8). *It's all in the genes*. Retrieved from: <http://www.vwer.org/2010/12/08/its-all-in-the-genes/>

- Meyrowitz, J. (2001, June 15). Morphing McLuhan: Medium Theory for a New Millenium. In *Proceedings of the Media Ecology Association, Volume 2*. Paper presented at Second Annual Convention of the Media Ecology Association, New York.
- Meyrowitz, J. (Winter 1998). Multiple Media Literacies. *Journal of Communication*. 48 (1), 96-108.
- Mitchell, C. (2006). *Beyond the film: Using the internet to enhance the experience for experiential products* (Unpublished Master's Thesis). Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada.
- Mori, M. (2012 [1970]). The Uncanny Valley (K. F. MacDorman & N. Kageki, trans.). *Robotics & Automation*, 19 (2), 98-100.
- Murray, J. H. (2004). From Game-Story to Cyberdrama. In Wardrip-Fruin, N. & Harrigan, P. (eds.) *First Person: New Media as Story, Performance and Game* (pp. 1-11). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Murray, J. H. (1997). *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Nowak, K. (2001, May). *Defining and differentiating copresence, social presence and presence as transportation*. Paper presented at the Presence 2001 Conference, Philadelphia, PA.
- Nowak, K. L., & Biocca, F. (2003). The Effect of the Agency and Anthropomorphism on Users' Sense of Telepresence, Copresence, and Social Presence in Virtual Environments. *Presence: Teleoperators & Virtual Environments*, 12(5), 481-494.
- Oatley, K. (2013). How Cues on the Screen Prompt Emotions in the Mind. In A. P. Shimamura (ed.) *Psychocinematics: Exploring Cognition at the Movies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 269-284.
- Pearce, C., Boellstorff, T., & Nardi, B. A. (2011). *Communities of Play : Emergent Cultures in Multiplayer Games and Virtual Worlds*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Phelan, P. (1993). *Unmarked : the politics of performance*. London & New York : Routledge.
- Pinchbeck, D. & Stevens, B. (2005). Presence, narrative, and schemata. In *Proceedings of the 8th Annual International Workshop on Presence*. 221–226.
- Plantinga, C. (2009). *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Plantinga, C. (2013). The Affective Power of Movies. In A. P. Shimamura (ed.) *Psychocinematics: Exploring Cognition at the Movies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 94 – 111.

- Power, C. (2008). *Presence in Play: A Critique of Theories of Presence in the Theatre*. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi.
- Ptacek, K. (2003). Avatar Body Collision: enactments in distributed performance practices. *Digital Creativity*, 14(3), 180-192.
- Pullen, K. (2006). The Lord of the Rings Online Blockbuster Fandom: Pleasure and Commerce. In E. Mathijs (ed.) *The Lord of the Rings: Popular Culture in Global Context*. London & New York: Wallflower Press. pp. 172–188.
- PuSh International Performing Arts Festival (2015). *PuSh International Performing Arts Festival*. Retrieved from: <http://pushfestival.ca/>
- Radbourne, J., Glow, H. & Johanson, K., Eds. (2013). *The Audience Experience: A critical analysis of audiences in the performing arts*. Briston, UK and Chicago, USA: Intellect.
- Riva, G. (2009). Is Presence a Technology Issue? Some insights from Cognitive Sciences. *Virtual Reality*, 13(3) 159-169.
- Riva, G., Waterworth, J. A., Waterworth, E. L., & Mantovani, F. (2011). From intention to action: The role of presence. *New Ideas in Psychology*, 29(1), 24-37.
- Sacks, R. (1999). The MetaMOOphorsis: A Visit to the Kafka House – A report on the permanent installation of an interactive theatre work based on Franz Kafka's Metamorphosis. In In Schrum, S. A. (Ed.), *Theatre In Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and Directing*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Sallnas, E. (2005). Effects of communication mode on social presence, virtual presence, and performance in collaborative virtual environments. *Presence - Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*, 14(4), 434-449.
- Salter, C. (2010). *Entangled: technology and the transformation of performance*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Saltz, D. Z. (2005). Virtual Theatres: An Introduction (review). *Modern Drama*, 48 (3) pp. 629-631.
- Sant, T. (2001). *Bed-in for Peace (2001)*. Retrieved from <http://www.tonisant.com/performance/2001/>
- Sartre, J. P. (1964). *Being and Nothingness; an Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*. New York: Citadel Press.
- Sauter, W. (2002). Who reacts when, how and upon what: From audience surveys to the theatrical event. *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 12(3), 115-129.
- Schechner, R. (1973). *Environmental Theatre*. New York: Hawthorne Books.

- Schechner, R. (2003). *Performance Theory (Rev and expanded edition)*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Scheufele, D. A. & Tewksbury, D. (2006). Framing, Agenda Setting and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 9-20. doi: 10.1111/j.0021-9916.2007.00326.x
- Schroeder, R. (2011). *Being There Together: Social Interaction in Virtual Environments*. Oxford: Oxford UP.
- Schrum, S. A. (1999). *Theatre in Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and Directing*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Schubert, T., Friedmann, F., Regenbrecht, H. (2001). The Experience of Presence: Factor Analytic Insights. *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*, 10(3), 266-281.
- Schweller, K. G. (1999). Staging a Play in the MOO Theater. In Schrum, S. A. (Ed.), *Theatre In Cyberspace: Issues of Teaching, Acting and Directing*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Sheridan, T. B. (1992). Musings on Telepresence and Virtual Presence. *Presence: Teleoperators and Virtual Environments*, 1(1), 120–125
- Short, J., Williams, E., & Christie, B. (1976). *The social psychology of telecommunications*. Wiley.
- Singer, B. (2001). *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts*. New York: Columbia UP.
- Slater, M. & Garau, M. (2007). The Use of Questionnaire Data in Presence Studies: Do Not Seriously Likert. *Presence*, 16(4), 447-456.
- Smith, M. (1995). *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion and the Cinema*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sontag, S. (1966). Film and Theatre. *The Tulane Drama Review*, 11(1), 24–37. doi:10.2307/1125262
- Southern, R. (1963). *The Seven Ages of the Theatre*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Stafford, R. (2007). *Understanding Audiences and the Film Industry*. London: British Film Institute.
- Staiger, J. (2005). *Media Reception Studies*. New York: New York University Press.
- Stanitzek, G. (2009). Reading the Title Sequence. *Cinema Journal* 48(4), 44-58.

- Tan, E. (2013). The Empathic Animal Meets the Inquisitive Animal in the Cinema: Notes on a Psychocinematics of Mind Reading. In A. P. Shimamura (ed.) *Psychocinematics: Exploring Cognition at the Movies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 337-367.
- Tavinor, G. (2009). *The Art of Videogames*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Thomas, C. (2014, November 24). Late Company gives its audience a lot to consider. Georgia Straight (online edition). Retrieved from <http://www.straight.com/arts/776361/late-company-gives-its-audience-lot-consider>
- Thorley, P. (2012, May 9). *Virtual lab gives students rare insight into genetics*. Retrieved from: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/press/press-releases/2012/may/virtual-lab-gives-students-rare-insight-into-genetics>
- Tillis, S. (1992). *Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Tillis, S. (1996). The Actor Occluded: Puppet Theatre and Acting Theory. *Theatre Topics*, 6 (2), pp. 109-119.
- Touchstone Theatre. (2015). *Touchstone Theatre: Vancouver, BC – Canadian Theatrical Productions*. Retrieved from <http://www.touchstonetheatre.com/>
- Turner, P. (2013). The “book problem” and its neural correlates. *AI & Society*, 7. Doi: 10.1007/s00146-013-0491-x
- Ubersfeld, A. (1996 [1981]). *Lire le théâtre II : L'école du spectateur* (revised edition). Paris: Éditions Bélin.
- Universal Studios (2015). *Jurassic World*. Retrieved from: <http://www.jurassicworld.com/>
- Unterman, B. (2005). *Computer-mediated Theatre: An Examination of an Emerging Art Form* (Master's Thesis, University of Alberta, 2005). Masters Abstracts International, 44/02, April 2006.
- Unterman, B. (2007). *The Audience in Cyberspace: The Lessons of Hyperperformance*. Paper presentation at Intermediality, Theatricality, Performance,(Re)-presentation and the New Media, organized by the Centre de la Recherche en Intermédialité, Quebec City.
- Unterman, B. (2008). *La virtualité de la présence performative*. Presented at the ACFAS annual conference, Montreal.
- Unterman, B. (2009). *Performance Place in the Unreal Territories of Cyberspace*. Presented at the Canadian Association of Theatre Researchers annual conference, Halifax.

- Van Baren, J. & IJsselsteijn, W. (2004). *Measuring Presence: A Guide to Current Measurement Approaches*. Omnipres Project, Eindhoven University of Technology.
- Wagner, R. The Artwork of the Future. In A. Goldman & E. Sprinehorn (Eds.) *Wagner on Music and Drama: A Compendium of Richard Wagner's Prose Works* (pp. 179-234). New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.
- Westerman, D. & Skalski, P. D. (2010) Computers and Telepresence: A Ghost in the Machine? In C. C. Bracken & P. D. Skalski (Eds.) *Immersed in Media: Telepresence in Everyday Life* (pp. 63-86). London & NY: Routledge.
- White, G. (2013). *Audience Participation in Theatre: Aesthetics of the Invitation*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Wolf, M. J. P. (2001). Genre and the Video Game. In *The medium of the video game* (Wolf, M. J. P., ed.). Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Yee, N. & Bailenson, J. N. (2007). The Proteus Effect: Self transformations in virtual reality. *Human Communication Research*, 33, 271-290.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Fourth Edition*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Ytreberg, E. (2006) Premeditations of performance in recent live television: A scripting approach to media production studies. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9, p. 421-440
- Zhao, S. (2003). Toward a taxonomy of copresence. *Presence: Teleoperators & Virtual Environments*, 12(5), 445-455.