

INTERSYMP 2010
22nd International Conference on
Systems Research, Informatics and Cybernetics
August 2-6, 2010
Markgraf-Ludwig Gymnasium, Hardstrasse 2
Baden-Baden, Germany

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Announcing a Special Focus Symposion (August 5, 2010)
on
COMPROVISATIONS - Improvisation Systems
in Performing Arts and Technologies

chaired by

Sandeep Bhagwati, Composer and Theatre Director
Canada Research Chair for Inter-X Art,
Acting Director, Hexagram Institute of Research-Creation in Media Arts and Technologies,
Concordia University Montréal, Canada

and co-chaired by

Chris Ziegler, Performing Arts Media Artist, Research Fellow
ZKM Center for Art and Media Technology Karlsruhe, Germany
John Schranz, Theatre Director and Professor
Coordinator, European Master's Degree Programme in the Science of Performative Creativity,
University of Malta, Valletta, Malta
Tsutomu Fujinami, Associate Professor
School of Knowledge Science, Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, Ishikawa, Japan

CONTEXT

Over the past decades, the performing arts have been moving away from the interpretation of fixed notations and repetitive, rehearsed performances. This shift has been intensified by increasingly reactive stage and music technologies.

This artistic reality, however, is still marginal to the mainstream public perception of performing arts - for several reasons: the desire of audiences to re-encounter reliable performances, the difficulty of analyzing and theorizing about ephemeral artmaking practices that do not rely on linear "scripts" or "scores" and the cultural prejudice, especially in Europe, that repeatable performance ("interpretation") somehow stands on the side of "high art", while improvisation immediately evokes a somehow "lower" realm of popular entertainment, folk, and non-western art forms.

The fact remains that it is much easier to convince sponsors of funding a "well-rehearsed, complex interpretation of a written masterpiece" than giving money for "something made up on the spur of the moment." Protestant work-ethics may come into play here, as does the dualistic form-content bias of western culture, with its idea of the existence of platonic forms, the spiritual mind-body dualism, the

supreme importance of the "Imitation of Christ", and Kantian metaphysics.

All these discourses, however, mask that there is no such thing as a "pure" improvisation. All improvised performance relies heavily on rule-systems, whether learned explicitly or embodied by rigorous training. Different performing art traditions worldwide have developed elaborate improvisation systems that allow initiated audiences to judge whether a particular improvisation is an acceptable instance of "their" art form or not. Recent modernist (especially North-American) approaches to improvisation, by contrast, have emphasized a purportedly "free play" largely unfettered by explicit rules, while at the same time stressing the importance of social and consensual aesthetics and establishing close-knit communities of performers and audiences – often marketing their "free improv techniques" by expensive workshops and the certification of practitioners.

FOCUS

While *embodiment vs. explicit rules, oral vs. written models* etc. were real dichotomies in the pre-computer age, the advent of reactive technology has changed the playing field considerably.

Elaborate and complex rule systems in the form of computer software have become part of our everyday world, techniques of knowledge accumulation have moved beyond the dipole of embodied or studied knowledge into contingent, situative knowledge - knowing when and how to apply which kind of knowledge has become more important than learning and using a repertoire of acquired wisdom.

This cultural shift has found its expression in new forms of art called interactive, and in reactive stage and music practices - all based on extensive computer systems. Has it also influenced the aesthetics of non-technology dependent practices in performing arts ?

How can we understand this shift, what are its technological foundations, how do artistic rule systems influence technology and vice versa? Has this shift towards technology also influenced audience perceptions of the relative value of composed vs. improvised performance?

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite scholarly papers and critical texts, (re)presentations of and reflections on artistic or technological work, reports on field work, presentations of survey data and posters on any of the artistic questions and research areas mentioned above from

- performing artists
- performance theorists
- engineers

- systems analysts
- computer scientists
- philosophers
- cultural historians
- social scientists
- (ethno)musicologists
- historians of performing arts
- any performing arts practitioners, performing arts enablers and thinkers.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Abstracts (500 words max) in English, German or French and presentations should be written in a clear, interdisciplinary language, with ample explanations of technical terms and usages specific to the author's field.

Abstracts (Microsoft Word or PDF) together with a short bio of each of the authors (100 words max), their institutional or artistic affiliation (if applicable) and their official address may be submitted electronically latest by March 30, 2010 to:

Sandeep Bhagwati, Concordia University Montréal

comprovisation2010@gmail.com

[Please also use this e-mail address for questions and information requests]

In the cover e-mail please indicate the nature of your presentation:

- Poster
- Paper
- Performance Report using audiovisual media [*media files up to 20 MB – as well as links to online video/audio archives - may be submitted as in addition to abstracts*]
- Live Performance [*please note that all production elements and costs necessary for a live performance must be assumed by the presenter.*]

Please take note of the registration conditions, deadlines and registration fees at http://www.ias.edu/frameset_start_inters_ann.html before submitting the abstract.

Review Process and Conference Proceedings

All submitted papers and abstracts will be peer-reviewed as soon as they arrive. Final papers should not exceed 5 single-spaced typed pages. Conference Proceedings will be published and selected papers may be published in book format.

Important Dates

- March 30, 2010 Abstract due
- April 9, 2010 Notice of Acceptance
- May 9, 2010 Final Paper due

General Chair

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