

Avatar Theatre Manifesto v.1.2

In The Theatre of the Avatar, the synthespian is employed as...

...an actor that has no personal ego to conflict with the intended characterization. The avatar is the fusion of several traditional entertainment techniques: the design of animation, the 3D form of puppetry, and through motion capture, the gesture of pantomime. Add digital memory and emergent processes, and the avatar has the potential to realize Craig's vision of the Ultermarionette as the acting medium of the future.

...the ideal buddy, sidekick, or helper character for embodied human actors. Rather than replace human actors ala Craig, the avatar, like the puppet, is best suited to play with human actors, who by interacting and improvising directly together on a stage or movie set, makes for more believable characters.

...perfect for uncanny, nonhuman, or superhuman roles, especially in symbolic, fantastic, or mythic scenes. The avatar has the capacity to go beyond realism, away from imitation and impersonation, to more designed representations of form and gesture, and finally to creative artistic expression through improvisation and interaction with human actors.

...part of the technological organism that is fundamental to all theatrical magic. In the acting medium of the future, digital media is not relegated as support for human actors, but instead is an equal part of an integrated dramatic system, that includes both embodied and disembodied actors through projections, cameras, lights, speakers, and even the proscenium itself.

Topher

Theatre of the Avatar



Mimesis & Mocap Performance Study

featuring live
performances of
The Magic Mirror Game
by

Topher Maraffi

Mimesis & Mocap DANM MFA Performance Study:

Over a hundred years ago Edward Gordon Craig predicted the future invention of a theatrical medium that would create more believable stage characters, which he termed the *Ubermarionette*. Since then animated 3D characters have been designed in digital media, but have yet to be fully realized in live theatrical performances. *Mimesis & Mocap* is a cross-disciplinary performance study in creating expressive and improvisational interaction between human performers and 3D characters using motion capture (mocap) technology. The two performances in the study, *The Avatar Dance* and *The Magic Mirror Game*, envision future methods of re-creating classic dance and pantomime gestures with a digital double, or avatar.

The Avatar Dance was performed as part of the UCSC DANM-Theatre Arts co-production of *Stop the Press!*, where it featured virtual versions of the Rope Pull and Ladder Climb mime, as well as a Juggling Toss and a Breakdance Battle, and was the first time some of these classic movements were done between an actor (Topher 1.8) and his 3D avatar (Topher 2.0) in front of a live audience. The thesis performance of *The Magic Mirror Game* explores a virtual rendition of the classic Marx Brother's *Mirror Gag*, which is also played by Topher and his digital double in a backstage dressing room between performances of *Stop the Press!*

The Magic Mirror Game Live Performances:

Location: UCSC DANM Building Dark Lab (first floor).

Thursday April 29th: 4:00pm

Saturday May 1st: 2:00pm

Tuesday May 4th: 3:45pm

Reception Friday May 7th: 6:30pm

Added! Saturday & Sunday May 8-9th: 3:00pm

More info: www.chrismaraffi.com

Artist Bio:

Chris(Topher) Maraffi is a performance artist, technical animator, educator, and author. For over ten years he taught 3D character creation, and has written three popular books on the subject that are on Disney's suggested reading list. His research interest is to fuse theatrical, cinematic, and gaming techniques (such as live dance-acting, digital puppetry, performance capture, and expressive processing) into a new medium of performative entertainment. *The Theatre of the Avatar*. In the fall he will be starting a PhD in Computer Science at UCSC by joining Arnav Jhala's *Computational Cinematics* group, to develop expressive and improvisational real-time synthesesians.

Thanks:

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