

MULTIMEDIA
AND HYBRID
PERFORMANCE
— CREATIVE
STRATEGIES



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INTRODUCTION – LEARNING OUTCOMES

This publication is designed for theatre professionals, artists, educators, and cultural workers who are interested in developing practices in **multimedia, digital, and hybrid performance formats**. It combines theory, case studies, tools, and practical exercises in order to support both artistic research and applied creative work.

After working with this material, participants will develop:

1. Conceptual Understanding

- Understand the key concepts of medium, multimedia, intermedia, transmedia and hybrid performance.
- Distinguish between **dramatic and postdramatic** approaches to multimedia theatre and performance.
- Recognize how digital tools and mediatization change dramaturgy, authorship, presence and spectatorship.
- Analyze performances that combine live bodies, video, sound, archive and virtual space.

2. Artistic & Creative Skills

- Choose appropriate media for a specific story, theme or experience.
- Develop performances that work simultaneously for **live and online audiences**.
- Create polyphonic works where different elements keep autonomy instead of illustrating each other.
- Compose dramaturgies that include body, camera, sound, text and digital space as equal partners.

3. Technical & Digital Competence

- Use basic functions of **OBS Studio** for live streaming and hybrid performance.
- Understand framing, transitions, layers and scene composition in digital environments.
- Apply digital tools not only technically, but dramaturgically.

4. Process & Collaboration

- Enhance skills for working in collective and non-hierarchical creative processes.
- Develop ideas through experimentation, improvisation and shared authorship.
- Reflect on power, authorship and responsibility in multimedia performance creation.

5. Critical & Reflective Practice

- Reflect on their own artistic position in relation to media, technology and society.
- Explore ethics of visibility, presence and mediation.

CHAPTER 1

Theater is/vs Multimedia

Media (*lat*) - intermediary, that which transmits the message.

Media is the means of creative expression, it is the material, but also the language - vocabulary that carries the opportunities and the boundaries. How do you choose a medium to tell a specific story and how does the idea and the narrative adapt according to the medium?

In theater and performing arts, media, or new media, or multimedia, is often looked upon as a threat, or a contrast to the liveness of the performer. Can this multiplication of media expressions influence new dramaturgies?

VOCABULARY

Multimedia: Multiple media combine together in one coherent work.

Intermedia: Creative work that cannot be described as one medium or another, removing one media makes the work impossible.

Transmedia: Different media tell different parts of the story - distributed narrative across platforms, genres and languages.

Hybrid: Blending of forms/genres, formats in a non-traditional or even contradictory way.

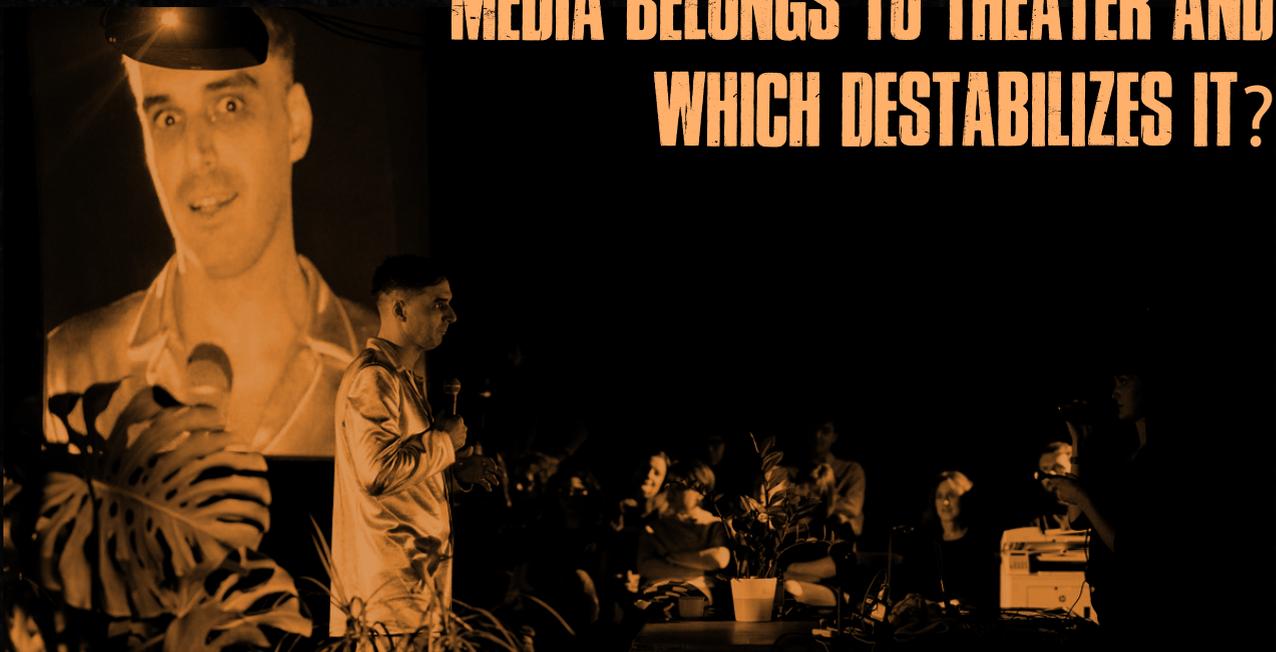
Multimedia art refers to artistic works in which several media belonging to different artistic disciplines are used together in the process of realization e.g. visual arts, literature, film, theatre, music, digital media. Typical historical forms of multimedia art include Fluxus, happenings, performance art, environmental or ambient art. In an ideal sense, multimedia art aims to erase the boundaries between art, technology and life itself.

As Miško Šuvaković defines it, multimedia practice can be understood through several key approaches:

- (1) a single artwork addresses multiple senses of the viewer;
- (2) different arts are synthesized into one conceptual and medial whole (the idea of the total artwork, mixed media);
- (3) the synthesis of media produces a new artistic discipline;
- (4) multiple media are connected to create a spectacle that unites spatial and temporal arts;
- (5) a single medium is expanded through new technological solutions (expanded media);
- (6) the artwork exposes the relationship between two or more media as its central subject.

In multimedia performance, these approaches often coexist. What becomes central is not illustration or narrative, but relation: the relation between sound and body, image and voice, space and technology. The performance does not merely use media; it stages their interaction as meaning itself.

“TRADITIONAL” AND “NEW” MEDIA – WHICH MEDIA BELONGS TO THEATER AND WHICH DESTABILIZES IT?



Theater art is traditionally considered to be **synthetic by itself**. Many of the historical theater scholars and authors have discussed it (Wagner, Craig, Artaud, Brecht, to mention the most famous). Theater already combines body, space, sound, light, text and movement, not to mention costume and set design and music. However, the introduction of technology and digital media into performance does not simply enrich theatre; it destabilizes it - liveness is no longer guaranteed by physical co-presence alone. It forces creators to ask **what presence actually means** when the body is duplicated, delayed, projected or archived. Presence becomes a relational and unstable category. The central question is no longer what does the story mean? but how does meaning emerge between media, bodies, machines and spectators?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which media do you personally feel most fluent in (body, text, sound, image, digital tools, space...)? Which do you avoid? Why?
2. When does using technology feel meaningful and conceptual in your work and when does it feel like decoration or a burden?
3. How do your artistic tools shape what you are able to imagine and express?

PRACTICAL INSPIRATION TASK

- Create a 2–3 minute performance sketch using **three different media** (for example: body + recorded sound + projected text) as layers. Do not illustrate the same meaning with each medium. Let each one take on its own narrative or development. Where did meaning emerge between the elements, not inside them?

CHAPTER 2

Dramatic and Postdramatic views on Multimedia

Classical dramatic theatre is based on mimesis: the imitation of reality through coherent narrative, psychologically consistent characters and causal structure. According to this model, the audience is meant to recognize the world on stage as an illusion of reality.

Postdramatic theatre, as defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann, breaks with this logic. It no longer seeks to represent reality but to expose perception itself. Instead of unity, it offers dispersion. Instead of narrative, it offers fragments. Instead of interpretation, it offers choice.

(NO) MIMESIS / (NO) SYNTHESIS

Lehmann writes that in postdramatic theatre, unifying perception must be replaced by open and scattered perception. The introduction of media into performance played a crucial role in this shift. New media brought new discourses into theatre - discourses that moved it away from imitation and toward transformation.

Where dramatic theatre aims at coherence, postdramatic theatre embraces instability. The spectator is no longer guided toward a single meaning but placed in a field of simultaneous stimuli, contradictions and open structures.



In a postdramatic piece, **dehierarchization** is the structural model. As Lehman explains, different genres, such as dance, narrative theatre, and performance art, are combined within a single performance, and all expressive means are treated with equal significance. Text, light, objects or music operate simultaneously in multiple semantic directions, encouraging the audience to engage in choice or contemplation. The work is intentionally not immediately understandable; rather, the audience's perception remains open, ready to discover unexpected connections, correspondences, and layers of meaning, not guided by a single hand or one creative mindset. In this way, meaning is deliberately deferred, allowing interpretation to unfold, change and develop over time.

In this sense, multimedia theatre is not just a technical extension of theatre; it is a philosophical challenge to representation itself.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How were you trained to think about story, character and conflict?
What do you consider "a narrative"?
2. Do you have a hierarchy in the way you work? In the creative team?
In the way you think about creation?

PRACTICAL INSPIRATION TASKS

- Take a classical dramatic scene you know well. Break it into fragments: sentences, gestures, silences, sounds, spaces (you can develop more elements). Develop a narrative for each of the elements and see how they work in composition.

CHAPTER 3

Autonomy and Polyphony

Multimedia theatre is polyphonic, often done in a collective process, with not one authoritarian figure, but combining different voices, and allowing them to develop their own sometimes even contradictory narratives. It is developed through a collective process, through the collective imagination of the creative team, with no central character.

For Heiner Goebbels, multimedia is not about decoration or illustration. It is about autonomy. Each medium in a performance has its own **independent voice**. There is no hierarchy between text, image, sound, body or space or any other means of expression used. This creates a polyphonic structure similar to musical composition: multiple voices existing in parallel without being subordinated to a single authority. Meaning emerges from their tension, not from their fusion and composition is created as layered horizontal structure, not a unifying vertical line.



ABSENCE = ALLOWING SPACE

Goebbels also speaks of strategies of absence. In his work, absence does not mean emptiness, but it actually creates space:

- the absence of a central protagonist
- the absence of a dominant narrative
- the absence of a fixed interpretation
- the absence of a single focal point

Through these absences, the spectator gets more space, and becomes active. The audience gets a chance to compose meaning rather than passively receive it. Multimedia theatre becomes a machine "against interpretation": it resists the imposition of one dominant worldview.

This has ethical implications. Hierarchy in art mirrors hierarchy in society. A non-hierarchical theatre practice is also a political imagination of the community.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Which element usually dominates your work (text? image? body? music?...?)
2. What happens when you remove the "main" element of your performance? How would the structure of your work change? And the idea? The position of the spectator?
3. How do you feel about not controlling how the audience interprets your work? Which strategy of spectators gaze control do you usually use?

PRACTICAL INSPIRATION TASKS

- Find a poem you like and use it as a starting **point inspiration**. Create a concept for the performance where you use only one media, deliberately leaving out the others - only voice, or just sounds, video, or only body, or just color etc. Let each medium get to the borders of itself in its full richness. Observe: *Where does meaning happen? Where does it resist you?*

CHAPTER 4

Mediatization and Presence

Multimedia performance introduces **simultaneity** as one of key dramaturgical principles. Unlike linear narrative storytelling, which unfolds in time, postdramatic multimedia performance can present multiple actions at once. Different media create parallel layers of reality.

As Eugenio Barba explains, theatre can organize events according to space rather than time. Several actions can coexist, inviting the spectator to choose where to look, what to hear, and how to connect.

Technology intensifies this focus. Video, sound and digital images compress and stretch time. They create a density of perception that challenges traditional attention. The spectator is no longer guided - they navigate a horizon of possible narratives.

REALNESS VS. LIVENESS



As Philip Auslander notes, in contemporary culture the mediated often feels more “real” than the immediate - live body and voice. Theatre must therefore reform its relationship to the body, the image and the screen, especially in cases of simultaneous presence of live and mediated bodies. When we see a live body and a mediated image at the same time, which feels more real? Which attracts our gaze? Which holds authority? The same question goes for mediatized voices.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Where does your attention go when several things happen at once?
2. Do you trust live bodies and voices more than screens and speakers or the opposite?
3. How does technology affect your sense of time, focus and intimacy?

PRACTICAL INSPIRATION TASKS

- Create a scene with **at least three simultaneous actions** in different spaces. One live, one pre-recorded, one mediated (live screen, speaker, projection).
- Do not guide the audience — let them choose what to follow. Reflect afterward: *What did you see? What did you miss?*



CHAPTER 5

Dramaturgies of video in performance

In postdramatic multimedia performance, video is no longer simply a recording or an illustration of the live action. It acts as an independent agent that transforms the way audiences perceive time, space, and narrative. Focusing specifically on video, we will explore the possible structural roles of this media in a performance. In the essay *Video, Mephisto of the Modern Scene*, theatre scholar Georges Banu classifies the roles of the video in a very inspiring way, listing the following:

- Expanding the stage space
- Video as a partner
- Representing the mental world of a character
- Dramaturgical partner
- Equivalent to stage directions
- Framing (close-ups, wide shots) in theatre
- Breaking the stage illusion
- Audience exploration
- Video as a journey
- Video as a protagonist



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Consider your own work: which combination of these roles could best support your artistic goals?
2. Which of these roles of video do you feel most connected to, and why? Which role do you think you have seen the most in your local theater context? Why do you think that is the case?

PRACTICAL INSPIRATION TASKS

- Choose a video role – pick one of Banu's roles (e.g., "video as a partner" or "representing the mental world") and develop a short scenario. Create a 1–2 minute scene where video interacts with live performance or performs independently. Use a camera, phone, or pre-recorded footage to realize the scene. Consider framing, timing, and spatial relationships.

CHAPTER 6

OBS Studio for Multimedia Theatre and Hybrid Performance

OBS (Open Broadcaster Software) is a free, open-source program that allows artists to combine video, sound, text and images into one live or recorded output. For theatre makers, OBS is not just a streaming tool. It is a digital stage. In OBS, you do not simply record performance - you compose it.

YOU CAN WORK WITH:

- **Scenes** – like stage configurations
- **Sources** – like performers, lights, props
- **Audio Mixer** – like sound design
- **Preview / Program** – like rehearsal vs performance

IN HYBRID THEATRE, OBS BECOMES:

- a camera director
- a scenographer
- a dramaturgical

YOU CAN:

- cut between cameras like in film
- layer prerecorded video over live bodies
- insert text as part of the performance world
- use chroma key to create virtual space
- control rhythm and focus

In this sense, OBS introduces a new media and **creates a new theatrical language.**

OBS AS DRAMATURGY

When you build scenes in OBS, you are already making dramaturgical decisions:

- What is foreground?
- What is background?
- What is visible?
- What is hidden?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When you use OBS, who is directing the performance: you or the software?
2. What kinds of power does the frame have?
3. How would you describe your multimedia performance logic: is OBS your stage, your partner, your performer, scenography or something else?

PRACTICAL INSPIRATION TASKS

- Build a short performance entirely inside OBS. Use a live camera or a live microphone, one prerecorded video, one prerecorded sound, one text layer. Use sources as autonomous "voices" that create polyphony: camera, video, sound, text. Rehearse with OBS like with actors: test timing, rhythm, transitions, silence.



Inspiration - links

Work of Heiner Goebbels
Work of Katie Mitchell
Work of Robert Lepage
Work of Simon McBurney
Work of Ivo van Hove
Theater in Quarantine



FURTHER READING SUGGESTIONS

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eho animato

www.ehoanimato.org

EHO ANIMATO is an independent collective based in Belgrade (est. 2011), working locally and internationally at the intersection of performing arts and multimedia. In their practice, performance, digital presence, documentary material, and collective authorship come together. Eho animato has created works in the fields of performing arts, multimedia, documentary theatre, hybrid theatre, and documentary film. In recent years, they are exploring digital and hybrid (live and online/streamed) performative formats. Since 2018, the collective has developed a close collaboration with La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club and CultureHub NY, producing online and hybrid performances together and curating the Serbian edition of the live digital performance series Downtown Variety.

Rooted in the independent scene of Belgrade and situated within the broader European performing arts context, the collective maintains a practice shaped by limited resources, transnational mobility, and long-term collaborations. Eho animato has participated in several Creative Europe projects, collaborating with both public institutions and independent organizations. The collective has developed a vast network of collaborators worldwide and is a member of international and local networks (IETM, New European Bauhaus, Reset Network, the Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia (NKSS), and CultureHub Global Community).

Their earlier productions deconstructed identities within a patriarchal society (*Glass Menagerie*, *After the Play*) but also explored potentiality and ability of its expansion (*Fragments of Disquiet*) Socio-political aspects of crisis have been in the centre of recontextualization of classics, such as *Rosmersholm*. Their interest in the past years has focused on exploring environmental issues in their documentary film *The Ways of the Heroes* (selected for the international Palić Film Festival), but also its deep connection with late-stage capitalism in their latest work – *In a Blink*.





Ana Konstantinović

She holds a Doctor of the Arts degree in theatre directing from the Faculty of Drama Arts in Belgrade, with her thesis focusing on multimedia performance. She worked at the National Theatre in Belgrade (2018-2023) as Education program curator. She mentored workshops for young theatre professionals (National Theatre in Prague - Crossroads festival, Faculty of Drama Arts in Skopje) and was co-mentoring (with Tanja Šljivar) the emerging playwrights workshop in the scope of the New Stages South East, an international project by the Goethe Institute. She was a guest lecturer at Universität für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna in 2022 and 2024. She directed more than 20 theatre plays, radio plays and a documentary film.

Marija Kovačina

Film editor, multimedia artist, and musician based in Belgrade. She works across documentary filmmaking, independent cinema, and performance, combining tech expertise with a multidisciplinary artistic approach. Her filmography includes feature, documentary and experimental films, many of which have been screened and awarded at international festivals. As a member of Eho animato collective, she takes the role of a creative technology designer, video artist and performer. She is an active member of the Society of Film Editors of Serbia, and an alumna of Talents Sarajevo 2017 Sarajevo Film festival.



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