

# The avatar on stage – producing a modernist utopia of the *Übermarionette* actor? An attempt to characterize the avatar form

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The play *Word on Wirecard*, staged at the Münchner Kammerspiele<sup>1</sup>, opens with a scene in which Jan Marsalek – a real-life figure – addresses the audience. Described by the press as “Europe’s most wanted man<sup>2</sup>,” Marsalek is responsible for a banking fraud<sup>3</sup>. Importantly, in

<sup>1</sup> *Word on Wirecard*, directed by Łukasz Twarkowski, screenplay: Anka Herbut, music: Lubomir Grzelak, video: Jakub Lech, stage design: Fabien Lédé, costumes: Svenja Gassen, choreography: Paweł Sakowicz, cinematography: Johanna Seggelke, Paula Tschira, Daphne Chatzopoulos. Münchner Kammerspiele, premiered 19.11.2023.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Jawor, „Jan Marsalek: najbardziej poszukiwany człowiek Europy” [„Jan Marsalek: Europe’s most wanted man”], InfoSecurity24.pl, 14.03.2025, <https://infosecurity24.pl/za-granica/jan-marsalek-najbardziej-poszukiwany-czlowiek-europy>.

<sup>3</sup> Wirecard was an international provider of electronic payment services and risk management. The company concealed 1,9 bln EUR in losses, falsifying the books, in order to attract investors. After revealing lack of funds the company declared insolvency, which led the British financial regulatory authorities to suspend its licence, which led to bankruptcy. Company CEO Marius Braun was arrested, in 2022 he was put on trial. His collaborator Jan Marsalek disappeared, probably escaping to Belarus. He has not been apprehended so far.

the play, Marsalek is not portrayed by a human actor but appears on stage as a digital entity, created using virtual reality and artificial intelligence. The creators thus rely on an avatar form, which adds an extra layer of “fictionality” to the story of fictional assets of the titular Wirecard company, whose CEO Marsalek was.

In contemporary theater, the avatar – as a virtual representation of the actor – is not only an aesthetic element but also a conceptual one, allowing us to rethink the category of stage presence. In his essay *Transpozycje obecności w sztuce mediów – od telekinezy do teleobecności* [*Transpositions of presence in media art: from telekinesis to telepresence*], Patryk Lichota analyzes the conditions of mediated presence<sup>4</sup>. He focuses on telepresence, repeatedly emphasizing that the direct link between technology and presence is central to his analysis. A consideration of contemporary productions proposed in this article aims to identify the technological elements that manifest themselves in theater through specific stage elements. The form chosen by the creator to construct the avatar will be of particular significance, and will then allow us to examine which category of presence is represented by a given stage solution. Lichota begins with the definition of telepresence. The author distinguishes between two entities as the basis of telepresence: the “operator<sup>5</sup>” as the “master of ceremonies<sup>6</sup>” and the “remote body<sup>7</sup>” as the “robot-slave<sup>8</sup>.” The operator manifests their presence, and the remote body receives it; “it is controlled by a two-way transmission of sorts<sup>9</sup>.” Lichota points to several characteristics of telepresence, which involves the reconstruction of the human body through technology, giving rise to the remote body. For all of this to work, data transmission and feedback are essential. Searching for the origins of telepresence, Lichota points to the processes of control<sup>10</sup> as a secondary need in the invention of a new technological tool or solution. This process proves to be the starting point for telepresence, which can be divided into subtypes: “autonomous presence, inter-presence, multiplied presence, dichotomous presence, co-presence, and absence<sup>11</sup>.” These will depend on the technological solution used, which in turn will determine the form of control.

The theater practitioner and theorist Gordon Craig<sup>12</sup> proposed replacing the human actor with an *Übermarionette*, a super-puppet fully controlled by the director. In the early 20th century, this was merely an *idée fixe*, which in today’s theatrical practice, enriched by new technologies, is being developed in various ways within the context of the relationship between the real human actor and the virtual entity, as well as the concept of (their) presence.

<sup>4</sup> Patryk Lichota, *Transpozycje obecności w sztuce mediów – od telekinezy do teleobecności* [*Transpositions of presence in media art – from telekinesis to telepresence*] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauk Społecznych i Humanistycznych Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2021), 59.

<sup>5</sup> Lichota, 59.

<sup>6</sup> Lichota, 59.

<sup>7</sup> Lichota, 59.

<sup>8</sup> Lichota, 59.

<sup>9</sup> Lichota, 59,

<sup>10</sup>Lichota, 62.

<sup>11</sup>Lichota, 88.

<sup>12</sup>Edward Gordon Craig, „Aktor i nadmarioneta” [„The actor and the super-puppet”], in: *O sztuce teatru* [*On the art of the theater*], transl. by Maria Skibniewska (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1985).

One recurring question in analyses of the *Übermarionette* theory is what that entity was supposed to be. Examining the aspect of control might prove crucial, yet was it in the orbit of Craig's interests? We find many references to the super-puppet theory in acting and directing practice, both before and after Craig wrote about it.

The status of the actor has changed throughout the history of theater, reflecting transformations in science and society, as well as in technology. One of the significant theatrical theories in this regard was Craig's doctrine, which emphasized the director's creative autonomy vis-à-vis the playwright and viewed directing as a total art. Expressing his disillusionment with the star-driven theater of his time<sup>13</sup>, Craig bluntly stated that acting is not art, because the actor is not a predictable medium that can be controlled by the director. A true work of art can arise only from material over which the creator has full control, which makes randomness unacceptable.

Craig predicted that an alternative to emotion-based acting would be performance rooted in symbolic gestures. He favored a limited form with less expression compared to that of a human actor's body. His idea of the super-puppet was based on the concept of an artificial figure—according to Craig, that figure, through “noble artificiality,” removes emotional influences, seen as weakness. For Craig, the ideal forms are statues revered by traditional societies in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Their creators are master artists who, inspired, craft them with great restraint in form. However, in his writings, Craig is not clear about how the director imagined the super-puppet in the theater—he certainly saw it as a distorted form derived from a figure he described metaphorically: “Its ideal form will not be the flesh and blood, but rather, the body in Trance – it will aim to clothe itself with a death-like beauty, while exhaling a living spirit”. It is unclear whether this was meant to be a life-sized puppet or an actor in a mask and costume, limiting their performance to symbolic gestures. Either way, the director proposed a new form of the actor, floating between the animate and the inanimate. The actor's body can become a mechanical form, without individual emotions, yet still “alive” in a performative setting.

Throughout history, artists and scholars have proposed various approaches to the creation of stage characters, based on the tension between the body and thoughts and emotions. Constantin Stanislavsky's method focused on the actor's inner experiences; the actor was to use their body to express the character's emotions, intertwined with their own, in accordance with the technique of psychological acting. The actor should enter a state in which their subconscious speaks through their actions, remaining “beyond the reach of consciousness<sup>14</sup>.” The goal of this method was to eliminate randomness that had previously characterized acting. This was also intended to allow for the search for “stage truth”<sup>15</sup>. The actor's task was to “[...]”

<sup>13</sup>According to Konstanty Puzyna, Craig saw an enemy „[...] in the aloof traditional theater, which imitated life conventionally and clumsily, a declamatory theater of stars” (*Przeciw konwencjom. Antologia tekstów o teatrze polskim i obcym od Antoine'a po czasy współczesne [1887–1990 [Against conventions. Anthology of texts on Polish and foreign theater from Antoine to modernity [1887-1990]]]*, ed. by Marta Fik [Warszawa: Krąg, 1994]), 74-76.

<sup>14</sup>Constantin Stanislavsky, *Praca aktora nad sobą w twórczym procesie przeżywania [An actor's work on oneself]*, transl. by Aleksander Męczyński (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1954), no page number.

<sup>15</sup>Stanislavsky, 25.

create the artist's subconscious creativity through a conscious psychological technique.<sup>16</sup> This subconscious creativity was to manifest itself with each subsequent performance. The aim was also to eliminate the possibility that events of everyday life, by draining valuable energy, would stand in the way of the actor's realizing stage objectives. Stanislavsky thus proposed a form of acting that would resemble a mechanical process, arising from the embodiment of a certain different – stage-based – version of oneself. If one were to view the stage alter ego trained in this way as a super-puppet, it would be entirely dependent on the human actor. Not unlike avatars, which always draw on the existence and thoughts of the person who designed them and who controls their presence on stage.

Stanislavsky emphasized the psyche as the primary element in developing a role and stage presence; in other words, he sought to train a system of internal control over the physical body. Meanwhile, his student, Vsevolod Meyerhold, focused primarily on movement as the foundation for the development of a stage character<sup>17</sup>, thus shifting the emphasis to the form of expression of the human body. His biomechanical acting training involved a detailed analysis of movement, which is why the actors in his Studio underwent extensive physical training. The director distinguished three stages of movement: preparation for action, the state of mind and body at the moment of action, and reaction to the performed action<sup>18</sup>. Meyerhold thus rejected naturalistic theater in favor of theatrical expression emerging from movement. The actor's task was to execute faithfully rehearsed movements on stage, and the method for performing such actions during a performance was regular exercise. The idea of training the actor's body to the point where movement becomes mechanical brings Meyerhold's biomechanics closer to Craig's impersonal form of the "super-puppet."

Contemporary Italian director and theater theorist Eugenio Barba<sup>19</sup> too, is known for his work on physical theater and body technique. Barba often focuses on analyzing the human body as an acting instrument, treating it as a tool for character creation through the conveyance of emotions and symbols. Inspired by the Indian Kathakali theater, Barba proposed the concept of "organic dramaturgy<sup>20</sup>," which is based on the actor's specially trained micro-movements, which are a reaction to another actor's micro-movements. The method of work in Barba's theater involves the actor shedding their "life's baggage<sup>21</sup>," while the director's role is to "stitch together" the matter of human bodies: "I held scissors and a needle, as my role demanded, but I was cutting and sewing skin and human flesh<sup>22</sup>". Work on micro-movements involved finding "equivalents<sup>23</sup>" of action. If an actor improvised a given action, the director would change the context of the rehearsed situation, and the

<sup>16</sup>Stanislavsky, 25.

<sup>17</sup>Vsevolod Meyerhold, *Przed rewolucją 1905–1917* [Before the Revolution 1905–1917], transl. by Andrzej Drawicz, ed. by Jolanta Czubek (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1988).

<sup>18</sup>Meyerhold.

<sup>19</sup>Eugenio Barba, *Spalić dom: rodowód reżysera* [On directing and dramaturgy: burning the house], transl. by Anna Górka (Wrocław: Instytut im. Jerzego Grotowskiego; Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2011).

<sup>20</sup>Barba, 111.

<sup>21</sup>Barba, 111.

<sup>22</sup>Barba, 111.

<sup>23</sup>Barba, 111.

actor had to find a version of the first movement in a different situation. According to the director, this was precisely what was supposed to create a sense of “strangeness of action.” Barba created scenes in which the actor added another layer of meaning through micro-movements. This could be interpreted as the actor embodying an additional character. This practice can be viewed as introducing the actor to the creation and performance of an avatar (a virtual representation) of their existence. When embodying the avatar form, just as in Barba’s work, the actor is attempting to eliminate their vital energy, which is why Barba can be considered the founder of the para-avatar practice.

At the intersection of theater and dance lies Oskar Schlemmer’s 1922 “triadic ballet”<sup>24</sup> project. This artistic project, like the aforementioned practices, relates to the avatar form through its organic nature. As part of his Bauhaus seminar, Schlemmer developed the concept of the “new man” and, on this basis, proposed the mechanization of theater<sup>25</sup>. His *Triadic Ballet* is a dance performance resorting to triadic geometric forms and colors in the construction of the costumes. The dancers are clad in sculptural costumes that deliberately restrict their movement, made from materials of contrasting colors and textures (very hard and very soft). Performing in these costumes, the artists submitted to the form imposed by them, which dominated the stage process. It was not they who mattered as actors or dancers, but their bodies as the internal mechanism moving the outer shell of the geometrized costume.

Contemporary theater artists also seek alternatives to the human actor’s body. They do so for various reasons and employ far more sophisticated technologies than Craig did. One such artist is Jan Mocek, a theater artist from Prague, who conceptually blends elements of pop culture, politics, and personal experiences in his work, utilizing various applications of new technologies. His *Virtual Ritual*<sup>26</sup> is an interesting example of how an avatar can exist in theater. This is an innovative gaming project that takes viewers on a journey through the virtual city of GTA (Grand Theft Auto)<sup>27</sup>, exploring the unique nature of a digital society created daily by millions of players around the world. GTA is an open-world action game using a third-person camera (TPS)<sup>28</sup>.

As in any game, certain rules apply here as well. Virtual metropolises often resemble real ones, and the game offers players a chance to explore the city, where various additional adventures await them, potentially taking place outside the main storyline. Mocek’s performance features the Experts: urban planner Osamu Okamura, YouTuber Atlet, and photographer and gamer Adéla Vosičková. They analyze the invisible mechanisms of how such cities function in the context of the tension between reality and an artificially created simulation of reality.

<sup>24</sup>Małgorzata Leyko, Reinhardt, Schlemmer i inni. Studia i szkice o dramacie i teatrze niemieckojęzycznym [Reinhardt, Schlemmer and others. Studies and essays on German-lanugage drama and theater] (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2023).

<sup>25</sup>Bauhaus – nauczanie / nowy człowiek [Bauhaus – teaching/ the new man], ed. by Małgorzata Leyko (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2023).

<sup>26</sup>Virtual Ritual, dir. Jan Mocek, concept: Jan Mocek, artistic collaboration: Sodja Lotker, Táňa Švehlová, execution: Osamu Okamura, Adéla Vosičková, Ondřej Pokorný (Atlet), production: SixHouses in collaborartion with Archa Theatre, premiere 2.10.2019, Divadlo Archa, Prague.

<sup>27</sup>Grand Theft Auto [Video game], BMG Interactive, DMA Design, 1997.

<sup>28</sup>Cameras in third-person shooter (TPS) games, where action is depicted from third person’s perspective.

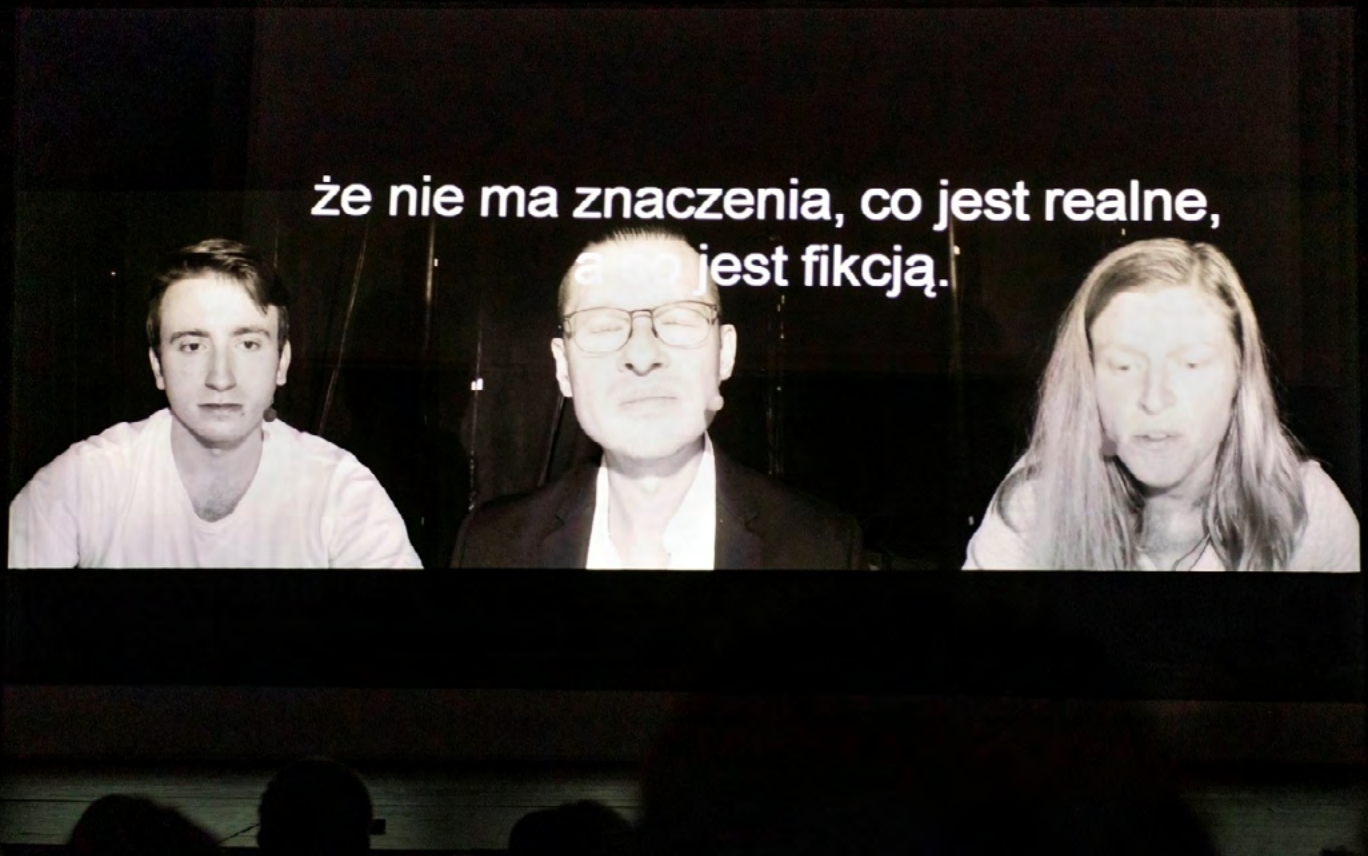


Fig. 1 Virtual Ritual, dir. Jan Mocek, author: Basia Woźniczka,  
source: courtesy of the director Jan Mocek

From the perspective of theater studies, this performance breaks with traditional theatrical conventions. The game becomes the world being portrayed, and the characters are the Experts' avatars. On the left side of the stage, there are three desks with monitors, behind which the performers sit and... play their avatar characters. The image from the monitors is projected onto a large screen, which becomes the main medium for the performance's content. The entire performance is confined to this spatial setting; that is, the audience follows the plot of the performance by watching the game and listening to the Experts' commentary on the gameplay. The performers do not physically embody individual characters from the game; they do not surrender their bodies to them, but instead control manually (by means of a mouse and keyboard) the characters they identify with: when performing a certain action, they describe it in the first person. The performance showcases the capabilities of avatars, which, by abandoning the actor's body, can exist as separate virtual entities. The performance thus reveals the relationship between the actor, the virtual entity, and the audience, posing questions about the boundaries of fiction, as well as the audience's identification with a character or avatar. At the same time, it draws attention to the rules governing the digital city, prompting reflection on the "reality" of digital cities: since they are representations of real cities, will the same hold true for the characters? Will the rules and modes of operation that characterize the characters in the game align with reality? An avatar replaces an actor, but can an actor replace an avatar?

The second part of Mocek's spectacle involves pre-recorded video clips. In every city where the performance is shown, the performers venture into the urban space, embodying their



Fig. 2 Virtual Ritual, dir. Jan Mocek, author: Basia Woźniczka,  
source: courtesy of the director Jan Mocek

previously introduced avatars. The actors wear masks and adopt a specific gait and posture toward objects, walls, and people, just as they would in the game. They also attempt to perform actions that are basic activities for their GTA avatars, such as getting into a parked car. The result of this action is an exploration of the relationship between the avataric human form (the actor imitating a game character) and the physical posture of a human being, as well as an analysis of how these bodies function differently within the urban space. Mocek's performance offers an intriguing framework for analyzing the relationship between the player and the avatar, as well as between the avatar and society. It opens up many possibilities for defining the avatar's ontological status. Consequently, the aesthetic layer recedes into the background, giving way to reflection on this issue. Thus, Mocek's avatar form presented in the first part of the performance stems from external stimuli, since, as a fictional character, it is controlled from the outside via computer. Using the categories of presence discussed by Lichota, one could say that the performance realizes "inter-presence"<sup>29</sup>. Lichota notes that this sense of presence is characteristic of video games, in which a designed "artificial interface"<sup>30</sup> and the "controllability"<sup>31</sup> that enables it, allow players to identify with a fictional character. According to Lichota, the avatar utilizing an artificial interface is one of two artistic practices that, by focusing on the creation of the avatar, attempt to be critical of it .

<sup>29</sup>Lichota, 89.

<sup>30</sup>Lichota, 89.

<sup>31</sup>Lichota, 89.



Fig. 3 Books of Jacob, dir. Krzysztof Garbaczewski, photo: Livia Sa, Klaudyna Schubert, Djordje Petkovic & others, source: <https://dreamadoptionsociety.com/dpn/f/the-books-of-jacob>

Another example, showcasing a different approach to creating and using avatars in theater, falls under the second practice mentioned by Lichota. It is the production *Books of Jacob*<sup>32</sup>, directed by Krzysztof Garbaczewski, an artist known for incorporating new technologies into theater, and testing those with the Dream Adoption Society collective<sup>33</sup>. The group focuses on exploring the language of digital arts, including virtual and augmented reality, in the context of theater and performance art. *Books of Jacob*, which premiered in 2024, is part of the *Experiments in Digital Storytelling* program run by La MaMa CultureHub in New York.

Various realities intertwine in Garbaczewski's production: video projections, live feeds from overseas venues, and three human actors, one of whom is completely immersed in a VR world, separated by VR goggles. The director constructs a multi-layered, deliberately heterogeneous structure in which the boundaries between the actors' physical and digital presence blur. On stage, three performers act out a sequence of scenes. Two of them belong to the primary order: they perform physically on stage, in front of the audience. The third performer, although physically present on stage, travels through the virtual world thanks to VR goggles. His avatar is displayed

<sup>32</sup>Books of Jacob, dir. Krzysztof Garbaczewski, adaptation: Rébecca Pierrot, concept and VR technology: Krzysztof Garbaczewski and the La MaMa CultureHub collective, execution: Cricoteki and La MaMa CultureHub actors, production: La MaMa CultureHub (New York) in collaboration with Cricoteka (Kraków), premiere 7–8.12.2024, Cricoteka, Kraków, Boska Komedia Festival.

<sup>33</sup>„Dream Adoption Society”, Dream Adoption Society, 2017, <https://dreamadoptionsociety.com/das> access: 20.08.2025.

at certain moments on a large screen positioned behind the actors, directly facing the audience. He may thus be included in the virtual order. The online order is also present: situated between the real stage and virtuality, as an audio and video connection with actors in other parts of the world is maintained throughout the performance by means of internet tools. All parties involved attempt to create a theatrical form that utilizes the latest available technology. The inspiration drawn from Olga Tokarczuk's *Księgi Jakubowe*<sup>34</sup> [*The Books of Jacob*] can be noticed on the level of metaphysical experience. The practices employed were intended to offer an immersive experience, a kind of trance. The actor Paweł Smagał plays a character inspired by the novel's protagonist, Jakub Frank – a religious leader and mystic. As the protagonist, the actor, through pantomimic actions, creates the impression of being on his way, like Jakub, who travelled among communities.

Garbaczewski's avatar was created by means of virtual reality tools. The audience was able to observe both the outcome of this process – the avatar displayed on the screen – and the actor who, operating within the stage space, was responsible for the avatar's actions. Within the narrative, the avatar as a character held no specific significance; no discernible relationship or interaction could be observed between the actor wearing the headset and the other performers, nor between the performers and the constructed avatar. Thus, in Garbaczewski's work, the avatar may be regarded as a form of practice performed on the actor's instrument – the body – resulting in the creation of an avatar; however, within the world of the performance, its presence appears to be inconsequential.

With growing interest in new technologies, artists are increasingly incorporating avatar forms into their productions<sup>35</sup>. The performances mentioned above are just a few examples among many contemporary stagings that explore the presence of avatars on stage. Creators leverage the fact that this form exists in various types and variations. The only limits in creating an avatar are the creators' imagination and, sometimes, financial constraints. As shown in Garbaczewski's performance, integrating a virtual entity into the narrative of the represented world can be challenging, often reducing it to just a technological curiosity. Even with this approach – in which an avatar is created through “extremely intense trance-like immersion<sup>36</sup>” – Lichota sees the potential for “critical reflection on the part of the subject concerning the medium itself and its capacities for expressing knowledge about the world<sup>37</sup>.” Following Lichota, this particular realization of the avatar may be classified as autonomous presence. “The crucial element of autonomous presence is reduction – the subject does not focus on external factors, but rather ‘examines’ its relations with them and the reactions they elicit<sup>38</sup>.”

The use of technology in the creation of stage characters constitutes an inevitable development in theatre. It is highly probable that, had Craig engaged with new technologies in theatrical practice, he would have seen in the avatar a realization of the *Übermarionette*. The creation of avatars – especially those generated through VR headsets – appears to approximate Craig's

<sup>34</sup>Olga Tokarczuk, *Księgi Jakubowe* [The books of Jacob] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2014).

<sup>35</sup>E.g.: Robert Robur, dir. Krzysztof Garbaczewski, TR Warszawa; Himalaje, dir. Robert Talarczyk, Teatr Śląski in Katowice; G.E.N, dir. Grzegorz Jarzyna, TR Warszawa; Tkocze, dir. Maja Kleczewska, Teatr Śląski in Katowice.

<sup>36</sup>Lichota, 78.

<sup>37</sup>Lichota, 78.

<sup>38</sup>Lichota, 88.

proposal. Although such avatars are produced by means of a stable technology that leaves no room for error, they nevertheless remain inseparably linked to the actor who animates them. The avatar thus occupies an intermediate position between the animate and the inanimate form.

According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, “liveness”<sup>39</sup> denotes the physical presence of the performer’s body within a space shared with the audience; the avatar, therefore, departs from this understanding of presence. Its nature aligns more closely with Philip Auslander’s view, who emphasizes that in the contemporary world, “liveness” exists in relation to mediatization. In the performances discussed, the avatar emerges through the actions of a living human performing live through and in relation to technology: this constitutes the basis of its existence. Performance, in this context, corresponds to controllability understood here as a non-material category and as a signal directed toward the avatar.

The essence of the figure, both by definition and in Craig’s conception, is a material element. The controllability of such a form of character, that is, “playing” it, takes place through external stimuli, as in the case of the avatars used in the performance *Virtual Ritual*. One may distinguish yet another form of avatar, dependent on internal stimuli. Such an avatar is generated through VR tools, in which an appropriate number of sensors placed on the actor’s body enables the creation of an alter ego, which operates within virtual space. The avatar is born from the actor’s intention and bodily movement. To some extent, it may be argued that no clear boundary exists between the created character and the component that transmits stimuli, i.e., between the actor and the virtual entity. The key aspect here is the merging of entities, their mutual immersion in one another. By identifying a given category of telepresence, it becomes possible to determine the technological form employed, which in turn entails recognizing the mode of control; this then allows the avatar form to be assigned to a particular group of avatars: those controlled by external stimuli and those governed by internal stimuli. These aspects are linked to the phenomenology of avatars, which comprises the use of technology, the relationship with the real human (the actor), the space in which the actor operates, and the type of action performed. The typology of avatars in contemporary theatre proposed here constitutes a preliminary attempt at systematizing such forms. The examples of avatar creation discussed above reveal the scale at which fictional entities may function in theatre; ultimately, everything depends on the director’s intention. The continual development of technology will undoubtedly make it possible to distinguish further modes of creating avatar forms.

translated by Justyna Rogos-Hebda

<sup>39</sup>Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Teatr i teatrologia. Podstawowe pytania* [Theater and teheater studies. Basic questions], transl. by Mateusz Borowski, Małgorzata Sugiera (Wrocław: Instytut im. Jerzego Grotowskiego, 2012).

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## Performances

- Garbaczewski, Krzysztof, dir. *Books of Jacob*. Adapted by: Rébecca Pierrot. Concept and VR technology: Krzysztof Garbaczewski and the La MaMa CultureHub collective. Execution: Cricoteka and La MaMa CultureHub actors. Production: La MaMa CultureHub (New York), in collaboration with z Cricoteka (Kraków). Premiere 7–8.12.2024, Cricoteka, Kraków, Boska Komedia Festival.
- Mocek, Jan, dir. *Virtual Ritual*. Concept: Jan Mocek. Artistic cooperation: Sodja Lotker, Táňa Švehlová. Execution: Osamu Okamura, Adéla Vosičková, Ondřej Pokorný (Atlet). Production: SixHouses in collaboration with Archa Theatre. Premiere: 2.10.2019, Divadlo Archa, Prague.
- Twarkowski, Łukasz, dir. *Word on Wirecard*. Screenplay: Anka Herbut. Music: Lubomir Grzelak. Video: Jakub Lech. Stage design: Fabien Lédé. Costumes: Svenja Gassen. Choreography: Paweł Sakowicz. Cinematography: Johanna Seggelke, Paula Tschira, Daphne Chatzopoulos. Münchner Kammerspiele. Premiere: 19.11.2023.

## Images

Fig 1. *Virtual Ritual*, dir. Jan Mocek, author:  
Basia Woźniczka, source: material submitted

Fig 2. *Virtual Ritual*, dir. Jan Mocek, author:  
Basia Woźniczka, source: material submitted

Fig 3. *Books of Jacob*, dir. Krzysztof  
Garbaczewski, photo: Lívia Sá, Klaudyna  
Schubert, Djordje Petkovic & others, photo:  
[https://dreamadoptionsociety.com/dpn/f/the-  
books-of-jacob](https://dreamadoptionsociety.com/dpn/f/the-books-of-jacob)

Fig 4. *Books of Jacob*, dir. Krzysztof  
Garbaczewski, author: Lívia Sá, Klaudyna  
Schubert, Djordje Petkovic & others, source:  
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# KEYWORDS

*technology*

**CREATION**

**stimuli**

**ABSTRACT:**

The article examines the extent to which Edward Gordon Craig's historical concept finds its contemporary reflection in theatre, juxtaposing it with various categories of telepresence. The text presents the idea of the *Übermarionette*, as well as several key directorial practices related to working on a role. It also discusses selected theatrical productions that represent different avatar forms and models of presence. The aim of the article is to investigate to what extent these forms approximate the idea of the super-puppet and which categories of presence are realized by particular avatars designed by directors. As a result of the analysis and in response to the hypothesis formulated in the introduction, a proposal emerges of two distinct types of avatars: those dependent on external stimuli and those governed by internal stimuli. It is demonstrated that these two types are contingent upon the category of presence.

*virtual reality*

**form**

**TECHNIQUE**

**NOTE ON THE AUTHOR:**

Maria Sławińska – a doctoral candidate at the Doctoral School of Humanities at the University of Łódź (Department of Drama and Theatre), where she is preparing a dissertation on the development of the Polish Theatre in Wrocław between 2006 and 2016. She holds a BA in Theatre Studies from the Jagiellonian University and an MA in Contemporary Art from the University of the National Education Commission in Cracow. She is a recipient of the Leopold Unger Scholarship and author of theatre reviews published, among others, on the website of the journal *Czas Kultury* and in *Sceny Polskie* (published by ZASP). |