

Themes and Topics

Camillo's theatre of memory is a 16th century invention that was meant to allow the spectator access to all existing knowledge by means of a wooden construction in the shape of a theatre. Once world renowned, Camillo's theatre was forgotten after the death of its inventor, only to make an impressive comeback in the second half of the 20th century as an initiator of the computer and the World Wide Web. Camillo's theatre is simultaneously a kind of external memory as well as a representation of the way in which memory functions, including the way in which the relation to the spectator is constituted. This makes Camillo's theatre of memory unto an emblem and a historic point of reference which resonates in the subject of this conference, namely: the performing arts as providing a perspective on and embodiment of the relation between technology, memory and experience.

Technological developments allow more people access to more information than ever before. Additionally, they make it possible to store and share all experiences, inputs, and topics of conversation. These technologies alter what and how much can be stored but also transform how memory is shaped, how the stored is experienced, how our and others' memories are entangled in the here-and-now, and, in the end, even how we think and imagine. This does not only concern the newest high-tech developments. From the first occurrence of tools to the complex interactions between humans and digital technologies, our consciousness, our ways of thinking and imagining, are the product of our co-evolution with technology. "We have always been Cyborgs" (Andy Clark).

Camillo 2.0: Technology, Memory, Experience approaches this co-evolution from the vantage point of performance as artistic practice, as embodiment of culturally specific symbolic systems, and as functional technology.

Within this umbrella theme the following focal points are distinguished:

Performing Memory

The performing arts has a long history as a memory machine. From classic tragedies to kingly plays, from ritual dances to parades (to name just some of the many forms), the performing arts have been used to revive history, to re-present the dead, to remember historical events, to commemorate and to reconsider. The medium of performance is a technology of remembrance as well as a way of inscribing memories into individual and collective memory. Historically speaking a close connection between theatre as an apparatus of memory and the shaping of national and cultural identities can be found. Alternatively, the performing arts can also function as a critical practice for questioning processes of individual or collective remembering. The development of the 20th century theatre can be read as a reaction to the increasing mediatisation of society (Lehmann). Performance stages and deconstructs the relationship between humankind and technology, provides space for intermedial confrontations, and invites reflections upon the impact that technological developments have on our way of remembering, experiencing, thinking and imagining.

- What can performance, as theory and practice, teach us about the relationship between technology, memory, and experience?
- Can theatre play a role in the creation of a transcultural memory (Erll)?
- How do the performing arts give space to intermedial explorations of the possibilities, implications and consequences of the ways in which divergent technologies mediate the way we remember and experience?

Save As

Camillo's invention took place right at the moment when print allowed for knowledge and information to be stored externally from the brain. Not only did this allow for an immense expansion of collective memory, it also marks the moment that the archive takes centre stage as a technology of memory that operates externally from the body. It heralds the moment when material remnants attain a central position as a source of knowledge for memory of the

past and when history takes memory's place (Nora). Today the 'performative turn' and the developments of Web 2.0 make the restrictions of the archive as memory machine tangible and pay homage to the processual, embodied and (inter)active nature of memory. Especially now that the computer and the Internet seem to avow Camillo's promise of access to all the worlds' knowledge, the theatre again emerges as a model for the interface that this access allows for (Laurel). Simultaneously, the live arts display an increasing concern for the archive and the practice of archiving, ranging from digitalization-projects, oral history and to re-enactments.

- How does performing arts practice as an apparatus of memory relate to the logic of the archive, to the 'archival impulse' (Foster) and 'archive fever' (Derrida)?
- How do performance and notations as repertoire (Taylor) and performative remains (Schneider) provide a perspective to the possibilities and restrictions of the archive as memory machine?
- What can we learn, at this point in time, from re-enactment as performative practice and as a mode of thinking?
- What if we do not conceive of the archive as the opposite of the always perishable and never fully archivable present, but instead consider both the present and its remnants as apparitions of that which will have been (Roms)?

Ghosts

Technologies of memory, the performing arts do much more than merely representing or re-enacting the objects of memory mediated by them. They facilitate new psychic entities and objects of belief that, under appropriate circumstances, emerge as self enunciating entities. Theatre is haunted by such ghosts (Carlson) but they cling to other media as well. The invention of the telegraph gave rise to a new type of spiritualism through rapping sessions with the dead. And in the telegraph's wake, each new technology of communication—phonograph, radio, gramophone, telephone, X Rays, film, radar, TV, computer network—added its own spectral effects to the layers of uncanny visitations, hauntings, channelings of the dead and associated ghostly activities (Rotman). Media like photography have been associated with death but also with the possibility of a mediated afterlife, like the promise of new digital technologies for our deceased to become a ghost in the machine, or on the Net.

- How does the theatre and performance set the stage for the appearance of such ghosts?
- How may the performing arts facilitate encounters with ghosts produced by other media?
- How may theatre and performance illuminate how these medial ghosts act as agents in memory and experience as produced by and emerging from media technology?
- How might our understanding of performance itself turn out to be inseparable from a generalized technology, a becoming machinic of the world that reformats all reading machines (McKenzie)?

No Match Found

Contemporary technological developments in boundlessly expanding memory conceal that memory machines are always simultaneously technologies of forgetting. This forgetting is the foil against which the remembered appears (Benjamin). This forgetting can be traumatic, and can be a part of conscious or unconscious strategies of exclusion. It can also be an active choice, an act of resistance or a survival strategy. Technologies of fielding information, storing it and wading through it are methods to exert power and control. Millions of people without legal residency are forced to live within the blind spots of memory machines that organise our existence. The Internet displays manuals for 'digital suicide' with which users can delete themselves from the collective memory of the World Wide Web. The Netherlands features the first court case of a citizen against the state, denying storage of his biomedical data.

- How does performance implicitly or explicitly mediate processes of forgetting?

- How does it focus its attention to that which is not remembered or cannot be remembered (trauma and exclusion), to blind spots, to black holes, to what is lost in translation, to 'the memory of a human unhoused in being' (Kobialka)?

- What potential does theatre as a technology of forgetting have?

Memory Lab

Presently, science and art (re)connect in exploring the possibilities that new technologies provide in storing and transferring knowledge. In this context, the performing arts function as a space for experimentation, research, and reflection. Performances deploy new technologies and dissect their possibilities while engaging these technologies as methods to extend the memory of theatre; alternatively, new technologies function as explorative tools for future scenarios. Makers develop in collaboration with scholars new technological means for archiving and re-experiencing divergent forms of live art. These new possibilities and tools are, at the same time, relevant to applications outside of the theatre-space and may be precursors to new scientific insights and discoveries. These insights do not only concern archival practices but also reflect upon how technology mediates the way in which knowledge and experience are transferred, how we think, and what is considered knowledge.

- What are possibilities for and potential of a renewed collaboration between theatre and science?