

**FORUM THEATRE, TECHNOLOGY AND DESIRE:
AN INVESTIGATION OF HEADLINES THEATRE'S ONLINE BROADCASTS**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates Headlines Theatre Company's use of simulcast online video broadcasts of their forum theatre events through two case studies, *Here and Now* (2005) and *after homelessness...* (2009). I consider the place of these broadcast's within Headlines' Artistic Director David Diamond's particular practice, Theatre for Living (TfL) and its aim to create community-based dialogue. Through digital performance theorist Steve Dixon's four categories of interactivity, I explore how the online viewer's participation in the forum event is filtered via the use of web-actors, and the complications this has had for the broader TfL mandate. I analyse the web-actors' function using Dixon's concept of "The Digital Double", to explore how the role they have in the forum event is akin to that of avatars. This analysis draws primarily from David Diamond's published works, personal journals and reports following each production as well as recorded broadcasts of the two case-study performances. Read together with current scholarship of performance and digital technology, I argue that these case studies suggest how technology both has and has not served the TfL mandate and consider how Headlines' practice is complicated by simulcast online video broadcasts.

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To my parents...

INTRODUCTION

“Technology just hasn’t caught up, in this instance, to desire”

- David Diamond, *Theatre for Living* 288

David Diamond’s company, Headlines Theatre, has been evolving its practice of Theatre for Living (TfL) over the past decade to incorporate regular broadcasts of their unique brand of interactive live forum performances, both online and on television. Forum theatre, as originally developed by Augusto Boal, presents a play for an audience and then repeats the performance a second time, inviting the spectators to intervene physically in the show by taking over the role of a character to change the outcome of the performance. Since 1989, Headlines has adapted this basic model to include television and, since 2000, internet broadcasts that allow outside viewers to connect to actors in the live theatre space via television viewing and telephone conversation, and via web viewing and webchat, respectively. At the core of TfL is Diamond’s belief that “we can use theatre, a symbolic and primal language, as a vehicle for living communities to tell their stories” (*Theatre* 23). The living communities the company seeks to involve in this storytelling process are far reaching. Diamond, drawing in part from theorist Fritjof Capra’s ideas concerning ‘the systems theory of life’, has sought to engage the company in theatre practice and storytelling that involves “the human community that spans the planet” (*Theatre* 295). The desire to connect with this broader community has been the motivating force behind Headlines’ efforts to integrate live onsite performance with simulcast online and traditional broadcast technologies. Thus far, however, Diamond has been frustrated and challenged by technology’s limits within the practical landscape of this work. To imagine how technology might ‘catch up’ and better serve Diamond’s ends, as well as the broader interests of forum theatre practice beyond the company, it is important to attend carefully to their practices and problems thus far.

Two of Headlines' key performances, *Here and Now* (2005) and *after homelessness...* (2009), offer rich case studies as each live performance integrated online and traditional broadcast technologies in striking, distinctive, generative and yet still problematic ways.¹ Read together in light of both the company's particular aims and theory concerned with the communicative features of the specific technologies they use, these case studies add an important dimension to the rich scholarly literature concerning Headlines Theatre, forum theatre and the use of interactive technologies in theatre.

My particular research concerning Diamond builds first from the substantial scholarly literature concerning Headlines Theatre and its unique brand of performance entitled Theatre for Living (TfL). David Diamond has written extensively about his own company, not only in his award winning book *Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community Based Dialogue*, but also through various articles such as "The Squeegee Report" and "In this Moment: The Evolution of 'Theatre for Living'". The company's large body of work is also the focus of Lynn Mockler's 1998 Master's dissertation at The University of British Columbia in the department of Theatre, Film and Creative Writing entitled "Making the Headlines: The Evolution of Headlines Theatre Company". Further scholarship has focused on specific productions, most notably the company's 2004 Jessie Richardson Theatre Award winning performance *Practicing Democracy*, the premiere of Augusto Boal's Legislative Theatre practice in Canada.² For example in "Turning Theatre into Law, and Other Spaces of Politics", Geraldine Pratt and Caleb Johnston assess the goals of the performance and investigate how the project was received within the community. Kelly Howe's article "Embodied Think Thanks: Practicing Citizenship through

¹ In publicity material for the production, *after homelessness...* is titled in lower case letters, a trend which I have employed throughout this paper.

² *Squeegee*, Headlines' 1999 production had experimented with elements of Legislative Theatre but was still billed as primarily a forum theatre performance

Legislative Theatre”, and Jacqueline Kennelly’s “‘Acting Out’ in the Public Sphere: Community Theatre and Citizenship Education” also take up the play but through two very different lenses. The first argues that “the project constituted an embodied social services ‘think tank’” (Howe 240) while the second highlights participation in this project as a goal for reimagining citizenship education. Thus, in various ways, scholars have accounted for the company’s innovative works and significant impact both locally and beyond, demonstrating how and why TfL has developed its particular approach. My aim here is not to repeat this work but to focus on two less-explored productions whose integration of technology raises questions about what it means to be interactive in this kind of theatre practice.

The integration of digital technology in performance is a lively and growing field of research. Studies range, for example, from Kia Ng, Vitor Sequeira, Emanuele Bovisio, Neil Johnson, David Cooper, João G.M. Gonçalves and David Hogg’s investigations of the creation of virtual performance spaces to Susan Broadhurst’s development of artificial intelligence as performer. This research has been largely concerned with how digital media is shaping both productions and audience reception. Performer and leading field theorist Steve Dixon, for example, has argued that “...particularities of performance and performances in relation to how they have adopted and utilized technological developments in varied ways... create different types of content, drama, meanings, aesthetic impacts and psychological effects, audience-performer relationships, and so on” (5). In his 2007 book with co-author Barry Smith, *Digital Performance: A History of New Media in Theater, Dance, Performance Art, and Installation*, Dixon frequently uses his own work to draw conclusions about the impact and potential for technological innovation in performance, specifically as performer and director with the UK based company, The Chameleons Group. He also provides a substantial breakdown of leading

theories and practitioners that dominate much current scholarship about performance and technology in order to provide a more focused analysis “within an enormously wide and diverse field of practice” (563).

One of the most useful concepts for my investigation of Headlines’ work is distilled by Dixon in his chapter “Performing Interactivity” (559). In an attempt to better clarify and focus the myriad of concepts surrounding interactivity, Dixon offers a hierarchy of four categories in which to place the various types of interactive art and performance. He ranks these categories “in ascending order in relation to the openness of the system and the consequent level/depth of user interaction” (20). The first, Navigation, is simple in that it requires the viewer to make a straightforward choice and in doing so prompt the next action of the show/art/performance. The next level of interactivity, Participation, is similar since the audience is still making a choice; however, it adds an additional theatrical layer to the interaction. If the response to the choice is made as part of a collective or interacting with responsive human beings in a physical space it is more participatory and therefore fits into this category. Conversation and Collaboration are the final two levels of Dixon’s interactive hierarchy. They both see the audience involved in the creative process of the art work, but the tipping point between the two is usually related to the concept of authorship. Instead of just undertaking “a dialogue with the artwork”, as in a Conversation, Collaboration sees the spectator doing something to “alter significantly the artwork/interactive performance space itself” (Dixon 595). These categories and their definitions pertain to the direct relationship between a user/viewer with art or performance, and many of the basic themes and examples from this analysis can be extrapolated to identify levels of interactivity in Headlines’ work. I am particularly interested in how Dixon’s breakdown of

interactivity informs an analysis of broadcast forum performance to include the complicated viewer/computer/web-actor relationship and the role that avatars have in that dynamic.

Also within the chapter, “Performing Interactivity”, Dixon attends more specifically to the user experience, briefly touching on how Augusto Boal’s concepts from Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) come into dialogue with digital scholarship and the role of interactivity in performance. He cites theory from Gonzalo Frasca, who applies Boal’s understanding of interactive theatre and his goals for its reception into digital media contexts. For example, Frasca’s 2001 Master’s thesis at the Georgia Institute of Technology entitled “Videogames of the Oppressed: Videogames as a Means for Critical Thinking and Debate” applies basic forum theatre concepts to imagine ‘Boalian Videogames’ that create simulations to enable players to think critically (76). While his investigation of TO in videogame development does not relate directly to the precise questions of my research, it nonetheless provides a precedent for considering forum theatre in other digital contexts. Moreover, his conclusion that digital technologies can enable critical thinking and engagement when seen through the lens of Boal-based work aligns with my own investigation of TfL’s efforts using forum theatre broadcasts.

Dixon builds his arguments with reference to the work of multiple scholars and practitioners who experiment with digital media in performance. One such practitioner, David Z. Saltz, takes the conversation concerning interaction in performance further, investigating discourses surrounding interactive elements across various modes of artistic expression. Saltz’s articles, “The Art of Interaction: Interactivity, Performativity, and Computers”, and “Live Media: Interactive Technology and Theatre” use his own performance work as case studies to investigate the dynamic between performers or creators and the art that they produce. One particular article, “The Collaborative Subject: Telerobotic Performance and Identity”,

investigates the ability of audience members to manipulate digitally the physical movements of actors in live performance, which significantly informs the role online viewers have with web-actors in Headlines' work.

Johannes Birringer, who is also briefly mentioned in Dixon's book, has been investigating interactivity in live performance with a specific concentration on its role in dance. He has written numerous books and articles including, "Interacting" in *Contemporary Theatre Review* and "Dance and Media Technologies" in *Performing Arts Journal*. These works investigate the variety of digital tools available to performance artists and examine how they are being used to change the shape and reception of movement based performance practices in the digital realm. Specifically, Birringer questions how the meaning of dance is challenged as it is transmitted via technology and recognizes the need to adopt new epistemologies about the language and methods used to create such performances. In a similar way here, I hope to question how TFL practice is challenged by its use of technology.

These theorists all emphasize the importance of terminology to distinguish and understand the complex processes of interaction related to digital media. In its standardized definition from the Oxford English Dictionary, interaction is described as follows: "1. Reciprocally active; acting upon or influencing each other. 2. Pertaining to or being a computer or other electronic device that allows a two way flow of information between it and its user; responding immediately to the latter's input" ("interactive", adj.). While simple in its explanation, these two different definitions highlight reciprocity and mutual influence, two prominent elements within theories of interactivity in digital performance. I draw my basis for understanding the term primarily from Dixon's categories of interactivity since he has been influenced by other theorists such as Saltz and Birringer in refining his definition. His emphasis

on the level of interactive experience as the key factor of a piece of art or performance helps to distinguish Headlines' complex processes of broadcast forum performances, and the multiple dimensions of audience experiences therein. Headlines' forum theatre online broadcasts combine elements of Dixon's final two categories of interactivity, Conversation and Collaboration, in complex ways, involving not only 'reciprocally active' scenarios in the physical theatre space between audience and performer, but also beyond the theatre space to the online viewer via computer and back again. My exploration of how these specific interactive processes work in Headlines' broadcast performances aims to highlight important dimensions of these digitally mediated experiences and better understand how they in turn influence the presentation and reception of the forum event.

Throughout my research, I have been guided by a central question: how has Headlines' use of digital technology modified its particular forum theatre practice? My analysis begins by clarifying how Headlines practices forum theatre and the rationale behind its work. Theatre for Living has evolved in response to the contexts and environments in which the company creates its theatre performances. In the first chapter, I will outline how Headlines' mandate has changed since its first production in 1981, specifically focusing on how the use of forum theatre within Diamond's practice has developed from Boal's original TO practice. By addressing Diamond's relationship to the work of Fritjof Capra, I also will highlight the important elements of 'systems theory' that inform much of how TfL is used to facilitate community-based dialogue. Through this initial outline of Headlines' practice I will then be able to take a closer look at the specific use of technology within the forum theatre event.

In chapter two, I will address how the original forum event is changed to incorporate online viewers, and outline how they complicate the core components of the interactive process.

I discuss two aspects in particular that filter the online audiences' experience of the production, that of web-actors and the critical role of the midpoint Joker in broadcast performance. I will explain this latter role more precisely within the chapter, specifically discussing how the midpoint Joker decides which communications garnered online will be taken up in the live performance space, becoming another filter for the digitally mediated interactivity. Thus, communication related to the broadcasts enable the inclusion of a far-reaching audience while still ensuring the general shape and pace of the TfL forum remains as consistent as it would during regular performances. Further identification and analysis of these particular technological and interactive features of Headlines' online broadcasts will guide my discussion into a more in depth investigation of these components within specific performances.

My third and final chapter provides a thorough examination of two case studies of Headlines forum theatre that use each online broadcasts, *Here and Now* (2005) and *after homelessness...* (2009). Throughout these two case studies, I draw from major tenets, ideas and critical terminology of the aforementioned theorists to understand how Headlines' use of interactive technology in these performances served and did not serve its primary company mandate. I use Dixon's theory of 'The Digital Double' to guide my investigation of the web-actor's role in the broadcasts and highlight important questions about the challenges they present as sentient and somewhat unruly avatars for online viewers. My investigation of these specific case studies also brings to light some of the ways in which Diamond envisions addressing the challenges of technology within forum theatre. Through an analysis of the two case studies, I argue that while this practice allows TfL to reach a larger, more diverse audience, it also opens up discussions about the current application of, and barriers facing this particular use of technology in performance.

CHAPTER ONE: How does Headlines Practice Forum Theatre?

I first discovered David Diamond's TfL practice as a political science major taking undergraduate elective theatre classes at UBC. I had never before heard of people using art to achieve practical political objectives and was impressed by the work he was doing Vancouver. I knew immediately that I wanted to be studying this company and switched to a double major, political science and theatre. After further investigation of Headlines' work I was intrigued to learn that they were not only using theatre for political means, but were also involved in expanding the scope of their performances through the use of digital technology. In order to understand their impulse to expand in these ways, it is first important to be familiar with Headlines' founding history and distinctive mandate.

One of the core aspects of Headlines Theatre is that it builds on the foundation of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) work created by Brazilian artist Augusto Boal in the 1970s. Headlines Theatre artistic director David Diamond first encountered TO in 1984 at a conference on Theatre in Education in England and immediately flew to Paris to undertake a workshop with Boal to learn about his practice in more detail and find ways of incorporating it into his own work.³ Diamond developed his brand of performance entitled "Theatre for Living", or TfL, after this exposure to TO and uses many of its early ideas and games as part of his overall mandate to facilitate positive dialogue in various communities. Boal's internationally acclaimed book entitled *Teatre de Oprimido* (1974), or *Theatre of the Oppressed*, outlined a variety of theatrical tools, specifically what he termed forum theatre, designed to foster grassroots liberation from oppression. The ultimate goal of these techniques is to turn audience members into 'spect-actors' where both actor and spectator work together to create interactive and socially

³ Diamond outlines this discovery in the first chapter of his book, *Theatre for Living*.

transformative theatre (Boal 155). Replacing an actor, in a scene which explores oppression, the audience member takes control of the situation and creates a new scene based on his or her ideas of how best to break free of this subjugation. The many proponents of forum theatre argue for its importance in the development of healthy communities; by affording people the opportunity to influence the world reflected for them on stage, Boal's techniques establish a precedent that can then be practically implemented. Since its first performance in 1981, Headlines Theatre has continued to evolve its politically motivated theatre practice in an effort to utilize theatre as a tool for healing communities. Diamond has been the driving force of this evolution for the majority of the company's existence and, since 1989, has adapted forum theatre as the primary element in their professional performance practices.⁴

Forum theatre originated as part of Augusto Boal's four stage process to change the spectator into an actor. In ascending order, these are 'knowing the body', 'making the body expressive', 'the theatre as language' and 'the theatre as discourse'. In the third part of this process, the theatre as language, Boal states that "one begins to practice theatre as a language that is living and present" (*Theatre* 126). Within this stage, the spectator gradually increases her involvement with the action on stage, moving from simultaneous dramaturgy to image theatre and, finally, to forum theatre. In forum theatre, the third degree of 'the theatre as language', the spectators are invited to "intervene directly in the dramatic action and act" (*Theatre* 126). In doing so, they aim to change the outcome of the play using a solution they imagine would achieve their personal goals for the scene. The power of forum theatre is explained by Boal: "The truth of the matter is that the spectator-actor practices a real act even though he does it in a fictional manner... Within its fictitious limits, the experience is a concrete one" (*Theatre* 141). In

⁴ The company's 1989 production, *¿Sanctuary?* is billed as its first official Forum Theatre performance, following a year in which Diamond was developing and producing what he termed 'power plays', the early incarnation of his adaptation of Boal's techniques.

this way, Boal sees the action carried out on stage as a step towards physically carrying out the same solutions in the real world, a “rehearsal of revolution” (*Theatre* 141). As this description would indicate, early incarnations of TO had quite a revolutionary element that often supported binary discourses of oppressor versus oppressed. Over the years, Boal’s practice evolved and found various outlets for discussion and practice. For example, Boal’s book *Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*, examines explorative methods of internal oppressive forces rather than environmental ones and focuses on a more therapeutic branch of his original TO.

While Headlines’ use of forum theatre is still grounded in many aspects of Boal-based work, Diamond’s support of theorist Fritjof Capra’s understanding of systems theory highlights an important departure from classic TO. Diamond emphasizes that a living community invokes a separate discourse from that of the oppressor and oppressed narrative and explains his reasoning for this distinction in his book as follows:

Games and exercises in *Theatre for Living* have taken on a new perspective. We are never telling any one person’s story, but rather creating the best fictional art we can that tells the true story of the living community. Characters are no longer oppressors or oppressed. Characters have become community members engaged in various struggles with each other and with dysfunction, which is sometimes personal and sometimes systemic (43).

Diamond has come to understand communities as living organisms, and as such, recognizes that they are part of a larger living system. He insists that “communities are alive and need to express themselves” (*Theatre* 19), and the primary way he has found to do this is to use the

language of theatre. As the basis for this reasoning, Diamond provides a detailed examination of systems theory, more particularly, that developed in the work of Fritjof Capra.

Fritjof Capra's theories examine the holistic notion of life. In his foreword to Diamond's book, Capra explains, "scientists have discovered that the material world, ultimately, is a network of inseparable patterns of relationships; that the planet is a whole living, self-regulating system"(14). He highlights how this new world view is ecological and has established itself over the older mechanistic view developed hundreds of years ago by Descartes and Newton. In the social sciences, this holistic thinking is used to understand that "networks in human society are networks of communication" (15). Capra has taken the basic ideas from this new scientific paradigm of living systems, and developed the "the systems view of life" in order to apply it to other practical fields (15). Capra sees Diamond applying similar concepts to this theory within TfL. By creating art from within communities, rather than for communities, TfL seeks to create positive dialogue in a "self-regulating system". The dynamic within forum theatre events, therefore, changes dramatically when understood through the lens of Capra's theories. As Diamond explains, "[t]he invitation in *Theatre for Living* is to engage in the struggles of the characters, which we recognize as our own struggles- not to break the oppression (getting rid of what we don't want), but to create healthy community, or safety, or respect (getting what we do want)" (*Theatre* 43).

Since *Headlines* works from within communities, Diamond starts his forum projects with an invitation from these communities or in response to larger community dialogue that appears to need an outlet for discussion. Projects are initiated months or years in advance of performance and draw members from the specific communities the forum is targeting in the development and performance of the project. Each forum begins with a workshop process with these community

participants in the time leading up to the performance during which the group will go through a variety of games and exercises to create dialogue about and material for the show. This process and the resulting forum theatre performance is facilitated by a 'Joker'.

'Joker' is a concept that Boal discusses in his book *Theatre of the Oppressed* as a "form of theatre- dramaturgy and staging. It brings together all the experience and discoveries previously made... it is the sum of all that has happened before" (172). Boal introduced the Joker as a critical component in his system of theatre, whose objectives were varied. However, the most relevant aspect of this system in relation to TfL work is the Joker's mandate to connect to the spectator. Like many processes of TO, the idea of the Joker has been adapted by Headlines' work and Diamond often takes on this role in their forum theatre.

The Joker in TfL facilitates the overall flow of the show and interventions during public performance and is an essential component to the initial workshop process. While the Joker system in Boal's original concept is heavily concentrated on connecting to audiences and facilitating that essential TO goal of creating a spectator-actor during performances, in Theatre for Living, this role becomes much more dynamic, taking on the position of director of the piece as a whole, in addition to facilitating both the workshop and forum processes. Diamond explains his thoughts as follows: "it is the Joker's responsibility to both the working group and the larger, living community to make the best theatre with them that is possible under the circumstances under which they are working" (*Theatre* 123). In Headlines' forum performances it is not just about telling the story of a living community, it is about telling it in such a way as to best utilize the artistic tool of the theatre. The Joker does continue to be a conduit for the audience during performance, but he also shapes the theatrical elements of its initial development and acts as director for the work as a play unto itself. This inherently aesthetic element to Headlines' theatre

is worth noting as it informs some of the development and execution of their performances. For example, in *Here and Now*, one of the case studies to follow, Diamond was moved to consider hiring professional actors to join the forum workshop outside of the immediate community in which the piece was being developed because he did not feel he had found the right actor for one of the roles. While this did not ultimately happen, the impulse highlights an important dimension of Diamond's work. While Diamond is adamant that TfL is primarily focused on fostering community dialogue, he is still engaged in creating artistic productions that seek certain aesthetic outcomes. He explains in his book "[t]here is a very rich and complex art practice in the creation of interactive theatre. Professional artists have a place in this work if they have the desire and the ability to engage at a truly grassroots level. The practice has to be flexible in order to respond to the situations in which the living community is functioning..." (85). Diamond's ability to look beyond the intrinsic qualities of basic forum theatre techniques and engage with external trends and dynamic artistic elements showcase his adaptability within Headlines' work and mandate.

David Diamond discusses a unique and, for my purposes here, important aspect of TfL productions at the conclusion of his book *Theatre for Living*: the incorporation of real-time video broadcasts of their live forum theatre performances on television and the internet. Working in partnership with Vancouver's local Shaw TV cable station, Headlines Theatre has over the past two decades sometimes arranged to videotape performances and present them in traditional television format for simultaneous live broadcast. The company's first live televised forum broadcast of *¿Sanctuary?* in 1989, is hailed by the company as the first of its kind in the world (Headlines Theatre). This process has allowed viewers to watch the performance on their television concurrent to the live show and phone in to offer suggestions in the forum. The

viewer would call in and speak directly to an actor about their suggestion for the piece. They would then be asked a series of questions whereby the telephone actor could then take the viewers' suggestions and, as accurately as possible, intervene in the forum process on the caller's behalf. With the 2000 production *Corporate U*, this process expanded to involve web broadcasts where, in a similar manner, viewers could watch the performance via the internet and then talk to web actors in an online chat to offer suggestions. As the two case study performances I will investigate were both streamed via the internet while only one was also simultaneously broadcast on television, the most pertinent relationship to explore for these forum events would be those that occurred via webcast. Diamond makes the following statement concerning the place of these webcasts in terms of Headlines' overall mandate:

Once we recognize that a community is a living entity, it doesn't take long to start seeing that individual communities are part of even larger living organisms that comprise the human community that spans the planet. If the intent of our theatre is to create dialogue within the 'living community', then it seems to me we have a responsibility to keep doing these live tele/webcasts and, each time, to learn better ways to make them work (*Theatre 295*).

The webcasts expand from conventional TO forum performances in their use of technology to involve spectators from outside the physical theatre space. Further, the incorporation of what Diamond describes as web-actors, or what I will later call proxy spect-actors, into the forum process results in slight changes to the way that some interventions are explored in the performance and impacts how the theatre is used to create dialogue on a larger scale.

To understand how the technological elements of Headlines' broadcast performances contribute to building dialogue with a far-reaching audience, in the chapter that follows, I will

provide a brief outline of how the company has adapted its forum theatre to incorporate online viewers. Since its founding 30 years ago, Diamond has evolved Headlines' practices through constant dialogue with the cultural, political and social environments in which he produces theatre. TfL's incorporation of online broadcasts is an extension of this dialogue and highlights both the challenges and generative potential of its forum events. By first outlining specific ways that Diamond changes the format and presentation of his practice to include online communities, I can then move into an investigation of two specific performances in order to reveal specific opportunities through which the company has and has not fulfilled its broad desires. Ultimately I will hope to demonstrate that Headlines' use of technology has been primarily shaped by its own TfL processes and mid-point Joker system. The TfL performances considered here suggest that thus far the company has been most interested in using digital technology to communicate with audiences beyond the live theatre space in ways that serve the flow of standard TfL practice.

CHAPTER TWO: Online Broadcasts in Forum Theatre

“Until we have Holograms, it’s like this...”

- David Diamond, *after homelessness...*

Currently in Headlines’ broadcast performances, the forum event is largely carried out like any regular performance. The chief difference, however, is that viewers of the performance who are not present in the physical theatre space can also interact in the show via web-actors. In these situations, web-actors have to intervene in the performance on behalf of the online viewer using the motivations and emotional contexts discussed in a webchat. The web-actor attempts to change the play based on the viewers overall desires for the moment, and, in doing so, fulfill their role as what I think might best be described as a proxy spect-actor within the forum. Since the web-actor is not in constant communication with the online audience member during the intervention, for the breakdown after each one, they can only speculate if the online viewer’s suggestion was fully enacted or realized the viewer’s desire for the scene. Until the online participant can somehow be consistently present in the physical playing space throughout the intervention, it appears that this disconnect will inhibit the forum ideal of full spect-actor interaction and participation. Further, as the online intervener must work through a proxy and not physically demonstrate or perform herself in the intervention, the participation is limited to what can be communicated verbally. For these reasons, Diamond was inclined to joke in *after homelessness...* “until we have holograms, it’s like this” (55:58); he was caught up in response to an intervention and asked the web-actor a question that could really have only been answered accurately by the online viewer. As someone deeply invested and practiced in TfL, his brief confusion is suggestive of the layers of complexity at play in the communication. In some ways the joke is a red herring: it would have been technologically possible to keep in online or phone contact with the outside viewer throughout the intervention, returning for clarifications as

necessary, but doing so would have interrupted the flow of standard TfL practice. In order to understand how additions to the forum necessitated by the inclusion of technology contribute to this complexity within online broadcasts, I will first outline how specifically the audience experience of the event changes between online and physically present viewers.

At the start of each forum performance, Diamond enters the theatre space as the Joker to address the audience about what they are about to watch. In online broadcasts he is sure to welcome not only those people present in the physical theatre space, but also those that may be watching via the internet. He goes on to explain how the forum will proceed stating that the actors will present a play for the audience that will build towards a crisis and then stop. It will then be acted out a second time, allowing the audience members to step in physically and offer suggestions, by means of their actions in the scene, to change the direction and potential outcome of the play. Diamond is quite clear when addressing the two different types of viewers during the broadcasts to explain that each will be experiencing this interactive part of the forum a bit differently. For the in house viewers he instructs them to watch the first run attentively as a traditional theatregoing audience, and their chance to contribute and intervene will come around during the second run. In contrast, and for reasons of time and flow, he tells those viewers who are watching remotely to contribute their suggestions for the forum immediately during the first run of the show. They will do this by selecting a web-actor with whom they will privately communicate via the internet and who will then be able to enact the online viewer's idea for an intervention within the appropriate moment during the second run of the show. This is in contrast to the audience in the physical theatre space who will just be able to yell stop at any point during the second run of the performance and step immediately into the scene in order to enact their suggestion.

Since the online viewer cannot be present in the physical theatre space, he must contribute his idea for the forum through actors specifically designated for this purpose. I believe these web-actors become a type of avatar for online viewers of the performance who wish to intervene, as they are acting as proxy spect-actors during the broadcast. Diamond's book provides a better idea of how these proxy spect-actors are able to carry forward the interventions in the theatre space by outlining the basis for the communication that happens between the web-actors and the online viewers in their initial encounter (292). On the same webpage, or internet window, as the online broadcast there is an option for viewers to choose one of three or more web-actors. Viewers pick one with whom they then engage in conversation with about their suggestion for the forum. Once selected, the viewer is directed to a new chat window that connects them with the web-actor who asks seven questions. The initial questions in this series attempt to situate the intervener in their physical and social environment: "where are you (location)", and, "what is your name and age?". The first inquiry is concerned with locating the online viewer's geographical relationship to the forum event, while the second draws biographical details. The third question, "where in the play are you yelling 'stop'?", and fourth question, "which character do you want to replace?" ground the intervention in very practical terms. These could be considered the skeleton of the intervention. The web-actor must know exactly where to start from in order to step into the performance on behalf of the online viewer properly. The next two questions provide the muscle of the intervention that shape how it is carried out by the web-actor, "what do you want?", and, "Why/What do you want to accomplish?" Understanding the viewer's motivation and end game for their intervention, the web-actor then uses this information to try and shape the scene to achieve these goals. The final question asked by the web-actor builds an emotional context for the intervention: "what are you

afraid of (as the character you are replacing)?" (Diamond, *Theatre* 292). This question informs an emotional or physical state that the character in the scene might be focused on and as such can be a driving factor in the way that the web-actors use their theatrical tools and training to intervene in the scene.

The web-actors go through extensive training with David Diamond before the performance, often having previously participated in Headlines' workshops, in order to learn the principles of forum theatre (Diamond, *Theatre* 291). By interacting with the show rigorously beforehand, the web-actors are more attuned to what may help achieve the online viewer's goals and also become familiar with the material in a way that facilitates a cleaner interaction with the cast, and as an extension, the narrative of the play. They also run through a variety of posed scenarios in rehearsal before the actual broadcast to get feedback from Diamond as Joker, and director of the play. This provides them with the ability to see how they might best utilize their own instincts to carry out the online viewer's suggestion. I see this last component of the rehearsal process as heavily influencing Diamond's final question for the online viewer. Since this question is much less directly about the action in the play and more focused on the ideas or thought patterns of the character, it gives the web-actors additional tools to try to achieve the goals of the online viewer's intervention. In this way they can try to honour the initial suggestion while still being free to use their impulses as actors in the moment to carry action forward in the scene.

This drive to move the action of the play forward is highlighted by another development within these online interventions, the creation of what Diamond calls a mid-point Joker. This individual is a further layer between the action happening on stage and the suggestions coming from the online viewers. The web-actors approach the midpoint Joker with the interventions that

they have been given, and it is up to him to decide whether or not the idea will go to stage. Diamond notes in his book, *Theatre for Living*, that this is a necessary step to go through because of “the lag between the live action on stage... and the time it takes to ask the question on the telephone or in chat” (291). The midpoint Joker will monitor the interventions happening in the live theatre space and make an informed judgement about whether to use the online suggestion at any particular moment and make sure that the flow of the overall forum is not disrupted by repeating ideas or having to backtrack to intervene in a scene that has already passed. A good example of the mid-point Joker’s role is demonstrated by Diamond in his book. He notes that there were 26 online interventions taken by the web-actors during *Here and Now*; however, in the actual run of the performance only four of these actually made it to the stage (275).⁵ As a result of the mid-point Joker process for the online interventions the majority of these suggestions are never known by the rest of the audience. The only indication that other online interventions were suggested is in the closing speech at the conclusion of the forum when Diamond lists the locations of the web-viewers to indicate where other people were watching the broadcast, and thanking them for their participation.

These two components of the online broadcasts, the use of web-actors and the inclusion of a mid-point Joker, provide an interesting layer to any consideration of technology’s role within TfL forum theatre performance. Since the online broadcasts are usually only done during one night of a one or two week run, they are not the primary focus of these productions but rather a limited feature within them. With this in mind, it can be argued that the web-actor and mid-point Joker’s primary roles are to facilitate the smooth integration of online interventions within an otherwise conventional TfL forum performance. While the online viewers are still able to

⁵ 19 from British Columbia, 2 from Ontario, 2 from New York, USA, 1 from San Francisco, USA, 2 from Australia.

contribute to the event and interact in many ways with the story and dialogue being generated, this secondary status highlights important complications that arise with the inclusion of audience members from outside the physical space within forum theatre.

Even though online broadcasts of forum performances add many complex dimensions to Headlines' process, the basic goal to create engaging dialogue within a community setting is still a primary concern. The online community becomes an extension of that in the physical theatre space and their online contributions shape the discussions and discoveries within the play. The ability of forum theatre to empower a spectator in a very personal way, as aimed for in traditional TO work, may not be able to touch an individual through the computer screen in the same way as an audience member physically enacting the scene on stage; however, Diamond believes that "[e]mpowerment cannot be an end unto itself without working to change the patterns of behaviour that create structure" (64). By contributing to dialogue through TfL's online forum performance, online viewers are still able to connect to the community and offer positive suggestions that can work towards that change. However, as Diamond himself has recognized, more changes to how technology is used in the forum structure may be needed for online participants to participate fully in the community dialogue.

Even though online viewers are included in TfL through forum broadcasts, it seems as if there are still many ways to advance their involvement within and during the interventions. As explained in his book, Diamond's small budget means that the equipment and technological tools used in each broadcast performance are often borrowed, donated or rented (290). He also mentions that a significant amount of time and resources go into setting up camera crews, making the public aware of the online broadcasts and how they can get involved, and general organization in the days leading up to the broadcast (this is in addition to the myriad of concerns

already requiring attention for the non-broadcast performances). However, if Diamond is still able to get servers, internet access, and multiple computers with windows and mac operating systems, why then does the online viewer's contribution to the forum event remain so filtered once their online transmission actually reaches the physical theatre space? This limitation then prompts the question, how much might Diamond modify the inclusion of online technology within his forum performances in order to better include a far-reaching audience within TfL? Or, more importantly, how might this inclusion drastically alter the basic forum theatre model that Headlines already has in place? This discussion of specific technological elements within Headlines' forum theatre provides a starting point through which to analyze the role of broadcast's within specific performances. To understand how these components are applied in a practical way and how they impact the larger forum process, the chapter that follows will provide two case-studies that integrate this technology.

CHAPTER THREE: Two Case Studies

3.1 HERE AND NOW

Here and Now was a Headlines forum theatre event that took place over three months in the winter of 2005. It began with a community workshop at the Moberly Arts Centre in Vancouver on October 17th and was followed by performances at two different venues, first, the Ross Street Temple on November 17th and then concluding with a live web and telecast on the closing night, December 11th, 2005, at the Surrey Arts Centre. According to the Artistic Director's final report, *Here and Now* was developed to achieve 5 core goals: "to create good art"; "to be a true voice that stimulated a multicultural conversation"; "to get beneath the sensationalism of the news headlines"; "to reach a broad audience"; "to be a catalyst for the creation and distribution of a Community Action Report" (6-8). The report argued that each goal had been achieved through various elements of the month long performance process and highlighted that two of these goals were directly linked to the digital media aspect of the performance: stimulating 'multicultural conversation' and reaching a 'broad audience'. Diamond's emphasis on these links points to the potential for broadcast performances of forum theatre to reach beyond the immediate local theatre event and better achieve his particular desire for this work to reach "the human community that spans the planet" (295). Examining the online interventions that took place during the webcast, this case study provides a clearer idea of the practical implications of this technology and demonstrates an early stage of its evolution in Headlines' work.

Here and Now was developed in response to the many articles and debates surrounding increasing gang violence in the Greater Vancouver area, specifically within the South Asian community. *The Vancouver Sun*, for example, published a variety of stories in 2004 and early

2005 including “Police target Indo-Canadian gang violence: Task force needed to stem killings, police say” (Ai) and “Ottawa eyes plan to fight ethnic gang violence” (Chu). While Diamond does not quote any specific articles in his final report for *Here and Now*, he does suggest that this type of media coverage pushed Headlines to ask the question, “Why is it that the Hell’s Angels get to be called ‘The Hell’s Angels’ and are not referred to as a ‘white gang’ or some ethnically defined gang, and yet it is Honduras Gangs, Indo-Canadian Gangs, etc?” (6). Wanting to address the topic of gang violence as a larger issue that permeates all communities, not just one ethnically defined group, Headlines used this question to guide their process of development. Diamond mentions within his final report that the choice was made by Headlines to discuss gang violence specifically within the Indo-Canadian community since it was being so widely singled out by media at that moment, with the intent to stimulate a broader dialogue about gang violence through this specific lens (5). A community workshop was scheduled to take place at the Moberly Arts Centre in Vancouver in mid-October 2005 to develop the play for performance.

This project followed Headlines’ typical forum process by starting with a workshop for the project: a group of people selected by the company build theatrical dialogue about the issues through various TO and TfL games, and then followed this with a creation and rehearsal process where the cast members then use the atmosphere of the workshop to then create a final performance piece. The creative team of *Here and Now*, lead by director David Diamond, interviewed approximately 33 individuals to select those who would be involved in the workshop, and confirmed the actors from this group as follows: Natasha Ali Wilson as the daughter, Sonia; Raminder Thind as the father, Jeewan; Balinder Johal as the grandmother, Daadi; Jas Grewal as the mother, Rupa; Shawn Cheema and Jagdeep Singh Mangat round out the additional characters that were eventually defined as the son, Jay, and gangster, Kam,

respectively.⁶ Seth Ranaweera was also in the final billing of the cast but according to the final reports it appears that this was shaped during the workshop process when the final narrative included an additional gangster, Sunny. The cast and workshop members spent six days engaged in games and exercises to develop material which would inspire the script for the forum event.

Over the course of a month long process the script evolved to tell the story of a multi-generational Indo-Canadian family of five, the struggles the children face through their connections to gang violence and the larger impact of these events on the overall family dynamic. As with many of Headlines' forum pieces, the story built to a climax and then ended leaving several complicated issues to be addressed through the interactive process that followed. My description of the show is based on my viewing of the recorded performance that took place December 11th, 2005 that can be ordered online through Headlines' website. This recording is a copy of the film version of the performance that was streamed in real-time over the internet and broadcast on television during the live show. It uses multiple cameras to capture the action of the play, and was directed by Shaw TV's Mike Keeping while also trying to adhere to Diamond's theatrical vision. This is explained in Diamond's insistence in the artistic director's final report that "[i]t's clear- we are shooting a live theatre event, not making TV. We have to protect the play" (62). My understanding of this performance is necessarily distanced as I viewed it many years after the original performance. However, I also believe that viewing the performance in a manner similar to those who would have also only seen it via their computer or television screens provides a useful context for my later discussion of this work in relation to its digital media components.

⁶ This is the number cited in Diamond's Final Report (16); however, he also mentions that they were open to the possibility of setting up more interviews but it is unclear whether these actually took place.

David Diamond, as the Joker for this performance, enters the theatre space before the play begins to provide a brief outline of what the audience is going to see. As discussed in chapter two, in this introduction he instructs the spectators about the forum process they are about to witness and, since this is the broadcast performance, directly addresses those who are viewing the play outside of the theatre space. He impresses upon them the difference between their relationship to the forum and the in-house audiences', noting primarily that if someone wants to intervene in the production online they should offer their suggestions during the first run of the performance so that the web-actors can have enough time to get an idea for their suggestions in order to carry them out properly during the second run of the show. Apart from this initial note, the performance begins like any other forum event.

The play starts with an argument in the family and eventually leads to Jay facing the decision to shoot a rival gang member in order to be fully integrated into the gang, or face the consequence of being killed himself. There are three primary spaces where the action of this play takes place: the family's home in centre stage, a diner style restaurant stage right and a bench outside the house stage left. Supplementary action also takes place downstage and this area is used to convey different malleable spaces that some characters inhabit for individual scenes. The action begins in the home as we see how all five of the family members interact with each other as they go about their morning routine, and then shifts to gangsters Kam and Sunny discussing a new opportunity to rob an autobody shop and become independent from their current gang leader. These two dynamics lay the foundation for the primary action of the play; Jay's strained family environment is a catalyst for his introduction to and heavy involvement with the gang, and Kam's ambition facilitates Jay's eventual choice at the play's conclusion.

After a family argument culminates in Rupa being slapped by her husband, Jay storms out of the house and is later joined by his sister Sonia. The two teenagers wind up at the same diner as gangsters Sunny and Kam, who are revealed as Sonia's old friends from high school. During conversation at the diner that touches on family dynamics and Jay's growing reputation for getting into fights, Kam suggests that instead of getting into fights at random Jay should apply his skills to beat people up and make some money by working as what could be best described as an enforcer for the gang.⁷ Kam provides Jay with a contact number for an employee of his named Jaz who runs a warehouse and can provide Jay with a job. When the siblings return home, another fight breaks out in which the whereabouts of Sonia, the daughter, are the central concern, and Jay, the son, is left free of any scrutiny even though he was out with her.

In the next scene, time has passed and the action picks up with Jay and Kam discussing a new car the former has recently purchased. Kam insists that Jay keep his new purchases a secret from his parents to avoid questions and the two head into the diner to talk. During this conversation it is revealed that Jay has been working for Jaz for a few months now and is doing quite well. Kam talks to Jay about loyalty and impresses upon him the idea that his gang is like family, "without your crew you got nothing" (24:25). He then says to Jay that he is going to give him something that he will take everywhere with him from now on, because eventually he will need it; a gun. By taking the gun Jay is confirming that he is officially ready to take his activity with the gang "to the next level". With the gun now in his possession, Jay returns home to contemplate this new step. After falling asleep on the couch he is awakened by Daadi who has grown suspicious of his new things and confronts him about recent behaviour. Daadi asks if Jay wants to talk to him about anything and reveals that she has found \$3000 in his drawer. Jay

⁷ It is unclear what exact job Kam has suggested Jay do for him but the exact words were "walk around, kick the crap outta people?... put that shit to work and make some bucks with it man" (15:01)

reacts against this invasion of privacy and Daadi insists that as his grandmother she is allowed to investigate his things when she suspects something is going on. After her unsuccessful attempt to gain information from Jay they part ways with her encouraging words “you have a good brain inside your head, use it wisely” (30:25).

Jay meets up with Sunny while waiting for Kam outside in the rain. Sunny expresses his concern about Jay’s growing connection to the gang warning that his life is being endangered by Kam’s recent activities. Kam enters and yells at Jay to go wait for him in the parking lot while he has a conversation with Sunny. Kam and Sunny argue and it is revealed that Kam has decided to go behind Sanjay’s back and carry out his earlier plan to rob the autobody shop. Sunny is angered by this dangerous action and expresses to Kam his desire to ‘get out’ of the gang. They share a few moments of silence as Kam contemplates this information and appears concerned by what he has heard. Sunny says that because of their long history as friends Kam should just let him go but instead Kam walks away without response. Kam goes immediately to Jay and wordlessly instructs him to kill Sunny. The play ends with Jay holding a gun to Sunny’s head, repeating his mantra “you gotta do what you gotta do...” (34:43).

The play finishes and David Diamond re-enters the theatre space to invite audience members to intervene during the next run through of the show. For the intervention process there are a few changes to the shape of the play. First, the house lights in the performance space that illuminate the audience are only slightly dimmed. This change to the intervention portion of the performance attempts to include the audience physically in the playing space with a simple theatrical element, lights. Another important change is that the interventions do not follow the play’s chronology but turn rather on the Joker’s instincts. Diamond chooses particular scenes to start from and will skip portions of the play to facilitate a higher likelihood for interaction in

pivotal moments. In addition, each intervener is followed around the stage by Diamond with a handheld microphone to enable the sound to be captured properly with the video for broadcast. This particular aspect to the technology in performance is worth noting as it affects both the reception of the intervention and the dynamic on stage. In the first instance, sometimes the use of the handheld microphone inhibits how the online viewers are able to hear if Diamond is unable to move in synch with the intervener. In the second, Diamond's presence in each intervention appears somewhat awkward and potentially inhibits the actor's movement onstage. In short, having to use the microphone in these ways draws significant attention to the technological elements of the forum and while it facilitates the broadcast viewers' experience it interrupts the standard flow of the physical TfL forum process.

There were ten interventions that took place during this forum, and these included four from online viewers via web-actors. I will focus on two particular scenes in this case study; the first concerned the scene in the family living room between Jay and Daadi, while the second interrupted and explored possibilities in the final scene between Kam and Sunny. Both of these scenes prompted interventions from within the physical theatre audience and from online viewers. Contrasting elements of both types of intervention will help to highlight the characteristics distinguishing those that occurred via web-actors.

The scene between Jay and Daadi occurs after he has taken the gun; Jay is approached by his grandmother who has noticed a clear change in her grandson's lifestyle and attitude prompting questions about his recent activity. There are several layers to this exchange, the first of which is the family dynamic between Daadi and Jay and the tension between the generations in this space. This tension is heightened by Daadi's previous decision to look through Jay's

personal belongings where she found \$3000 dollars in a sock drawer, ending with Jay's escalating involvement within an increasingly violent, potentially life-threatening environment.

The intervention from an online spectator, Ali in Windsor, Ontario, was enacted via Hardeep in the theatre space. Hardeep explained to the audience after the intervention that Ali conveyed a desire for Daadi to keep Jay in the house by using a guilt trip. This particular intervention resulted in a similar action being repeated throughout the entirety of the scene, that of Daadi continually complaining of heart pain and needing Jay's assistance. This intervention only explored one avenue for keeping Jay in the house, but it did speak to the larger family dynamic. It was revealed through this scene that the space for dialogue between these two characters was stunted through prior actions, while also recognizing the potential for the family as a healing space, or safety net, within difficult times. For example, the fact that Daadi had gone through Jay's things caused a rift between the two characters and undermined some of the potential for positive conversation that could have developed.

This particular intervention is useful for highlighting Diamond's focus on systems theory in TfL. While the suggestion to use a guilt trip didn't result in the action of the play changing, it emphasized that Jay's personal situation was one component of a larger network that included his environment and family life. The reflection on this intervention prompted discussion about the role his family played in helping or hindering his choices and the ability to open up safe spaces to discuss important topics as an essential component of healing this family. The intervention from the physical theatre space was prompted by this discussion and further investigated this dynamic.

In the Moberly Arts Centre, a preteen boy stood up to take on the role of Jay in this scene with Daadi. He made the bold move to come clean about his activities when prompted by his

grandmother's inquiries about new possessions. This action led eventually to his sister, Sonia, meeting with Kam and through her connection to Sunny, being respected enough to get her brother out. This intervention encouraged a dialogue about the mechanics of Jay's situation and the narrow avenues for escape, most importantly that his direct connection through Sonia to Sunny was the primary element that facilitated his break from the gang. Also this intervention led to the revelation that one of the actors in this forum could speak to the reality of this choice, having been through a similar situation. The power that the spect-actor found within Jay to tell Daadi about his activities spoke to a real desire and strength within this character, and the truth of Jay's situation; in coming clean to his family they could work together to find a safe solution.

The final scene of the play between Kam and Sunny also elicited interventions from both the live and virtual audiences. In the original narrative Sunny confronts Kam about his plan to take over as gang leader, expressing his concerns about the violent result of this action, and asks to get out of the gang. His request is denied and instead Kam orders Jay to kill Sunny for wanting to leave the gang. Annie, watching online, instructed web-actor Natasha to replace Kam in the scene and try to convince Sunny not to leave the gang and therefore avoid having him killed. The choice to replace Kam, the toughest gang member of the play, was significant in this intervention and Diamond highlighted this in his recap of the intervention; "we don't need to condone his behaviour to understand his humanity in the moment" (1:51:03). While the intervener did not achieve her goal of making Sunny stay, it was nonetheless a powerful intervention in terms of the dialogue that it instigated.

The intervention from the live audience had an elderly woman replacing Sunny in this same final encounter. She played on the humanity in Kam's character and their friendship to find a way out and try to convince Kam to leave as well. Overall, it appeared that the spect-actor

had a very driven focus to reach her particular goal and I feel that this may have contributed to her inability to hear what Kam was offering as an alternative in the moment of the intervention. His continued question “have you told anybody about this plan” (1:54:25) and her refusal to answer the question and to see the escape route that he was offering if she would just say no, created a huge tension between these two characters. The frustration in this moment as an audience member having to watch the block in communication happen, spoke to the importance of creating dialogue and trying to understand and listen to solutions being offered in the playing space. It also shows that within the interventions done by spect-actors in person, communication can be hindered even without the filter of digital technology.

The difference between these two types of interventions, personal and via web-actor, as demonstrated through these examples prompts reflection on the limitations and possibilities that come with embodying someone else’s suggestion in a forum theatre performance. The first intervention highlighted the constraints that Hardeep faced as a web-actor working only with the previous information she was provided by Ali for her desire in the scene. She continued to use the same type of action, but also navigated the relationship with Jay to try and achieve the online viewer’s suggestion. It also inspired the powerful intervention that followed in the physical theatre space. In the second, Natasha, the web-actor, was provided with a really unique choice which facilitated a layered intervention; however, the intervention from the theatre space that followed, took longer to achieve the individual’s desire. A part of the web-actors’ responsibility and a practical tool for his or her choices on stage can be contributed to the dual role each plays in relation to the forum process. Web-actors were instructed by Diamond to ‘fill in’ the intervention as they enacted it on stage; however, the impulses of the performer are still quite shaped through their efforts to honour the original suggestion (*Theatre 274*). I wish to point out

that, as demonstrated by the physical intervention in the final intervention, if a person is so focused on achieving in their own desire for the scene they may fail to connect and listen to what is being offered in the theatre space consequently disrupting channels for communication that TfL could otherwise facilitate. To explore the constraints and possibilities offered through the web-actor as an embodiment of an online viewer's suggestion, or proxy spect-actor, it is helpful to consider their role as a physical avatar for the online viewer.

The word avatar originates in Hindu mythology as a reference to “the bodily incarnation of deities” (Dixon 259) and is now applied in modern thought to refer simply to a bodily representation of a being in a physically removed environment. In Headlines' online broadcasts I believe that the web-actors are acting as a type of physical avatar for the online viewer through the communication of their ideas in the theatre space. Dixon provides useful insight into the role of the web-actor as an avatar, with reference to his own work in *Digital Performance*. He discusses the role of virtual avatars in performance to explore the idea of ‘The Digital Double’. As Dixon explains, “[t]he notion of the double has been a particularly potent concept in performance since the publication of Antonin Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double* in 1938, and the metaphor has become concrete and situated in the theory and practice of digital performance.” Where Artaud casts life as theatre's double and calls into crisis traditional theories of theatre representation, Dixon postulates that there are four incarnations of the digital double, the reflection double, the alter-ego double, double as spiritual emanation and the manipulable mannequin. Dixon's own work with The Chameleons Group emphasizes the first and second incarnations of the ‘digital double’, such as in “Chameleons 4: The Doors of Serenity” (2002) where an actor in the physical theatre space, interacts with the digital projection

of himself. Here, however, it is Dixon's last category that seems most relevant, the double as manipulable mannequin.

The avatar in Dixon's final stage is "at the mercy of digital manipulations" (Dixon 268) and is explored as a virtual construction of a human being controlled by digital input. However, the basic elements of this double "as conceptual template, as a replacement body" (269) speak to the web-actor's process, as his or her actions are always being shaped by the online viewer's suggestions. In this way, the web-actors are "at the mercy of" suggested manipulation controlled by their struggle to honour the ideas and desires of the person on whose behalf they are intervening. Complicating factors to this situation are the web-actor's own impulses, actions and ideas. These necessarily influence the intervention as web-actors are artistically trained and sentient beings, rather than digital emulations. The disconnect then between what happens between the web-actor and online viewer in the initial web chat and how the web-actor brings those ideas to the stage is unavoidably filtered through her own subjectivity. The web-actor's desire to react as best she can theatrically to move action of the play forward is in constant mediation with her need to communicate and enact the online viewer's suggestion as accurately as possible.

The web-actor's unique position as mediator between online viewer and the physical theatre space is, therefore, pivotal to any discussions about the interactive elements of this model of forum theatre. It draws parallels to Saltz's discussion of the performance *Project Paradise* (1998) by the Centre for Metahuman Exploration in "The Collaborative Subject" which Dixon uses as an example of his third level of interactivity, Conversation. This classification emphasizes the generation of "meaningful conversation" and focuses on the reciprocity of the interactive scenario being "subject to real interchange and exchange" (Dixon 584). In *Project*

Paradise, two actors are standing naked facing one another and their arms are moved by robotic apparatuses that are controlled by two spectators in a physically separated playing space. In this case, each audience member controls one actor and, in doing so, is in conversation with both the performer and, more apparently, the other spectator who reciprocates the actors' movements in response. The layers to this exchange correspond to some of those that are present in *Headlines'* broadcasts, specifically how the web-actors are controlled in essence by online viewers. This level of interactivity fits with the type of exchanges that occur during interventions in the forum between online viewers and web-actors. The major obstacle to the web-actor's responsibility in the playing space is that she has to carry on the conversation on behalf of the online viewer with only vague conceptions of how they would react to the new information given. In the current model for these forum events the online viewer has a filtered interactive experience that is quite dependant on the web-actors' ability to carry their ideas forward accurately into the playing space, and therefore is only partially reciprocal. While the online viewer's role is still interactive within the forum, I would argue that it does not reach the fourth level of Dixon's hierarchy of interactivity, Collaboration, due to the mediated nature of their input. In contrast, I would say that the potential does exist for those spect-actors within the physical theatre space to reach this final level of interaction if they are able to use their time on stage to fully integrate into the action of the play and create a responsive relationship with the other actors that will actually shift the narrative through their suggestions.

Only a handful of the interventions in this performance actually achieved their objective to change the outcome of the play; however, they did all prompt significant dialogue about the issues presented. In doing so, they worked to achieve not only Diamond's overarching mandate to facilitate community dialogue, but also the individual goals for this particular performance as

stated in his final report for the show. The two goals for *Here and Now* that he identified as specifically pertaining to digital media, “to be a true voice that stimulated a multicultural conversation”(6) and “to reach a broad audience”(7), are both demonstrated through this study. There were web interventions from a global audience coming from as far away as Australia that all contributed to a wider range of voices and ideas to the forum process. In addition, the forum on December 11, 2005 was broadcast in real time via television and the internet reaching far beyond the 130 people in the Surrey Arts Centre. Diamond’s final report estimated that 1,200 individuals watched the performance via webcast internationally in addition to the 15,000 people for the telecast from the Lower Mainland. *Here and Now* provides a good starting point from which to examine the shape of Headlines’ online broadcasts and further investigate how they support and complicate the interactive processes of forum theatre events. The case study to follow takes these initial investigations further, revealing how Diamond’s core processes in broadcast forum theatre both change and remain constant as he continues to include a far-reaching audience in his TfL performances.

3.2 AFTER HOMELESSNESS

One of Headlines' more recent broadcast performances, *after homelessness...*, lends itself to an examination of contemporary use of digital technology in the company's work. This forum theatre event took place in the winter of 2009. It began with a community workshop on October 17th which was followed by nine consecutive nightly performances at the Firehall Arts Centre starting on November 20th. The last show at this site was on November 29th and was the one webcast performance. The show finished out its run with a final week at Holy Trinity Cathedral with six shows from December 1 – 6th. *After homelessness...* was created with members of the Greater Vancouver area who had experience with homelessness and developed over three weeks leading up to the first show. The impulse for this performance came about when Headlines Theatre started thinking about the best way to approach the issue of homelessness in Greater Vancouver. It was obvious to them that a show simply drawing attention to the issue was not necessary since it was already widely reported in local media and addressed explicitly by government and community groups. As Diamond explains in his final report for the production, What Headlines felt needed to be done was to discover new ways to think about housing, particularly creating appropriate, safe housing opportunities, and explore how the community might work together to discover these spaces. There were clearly many issues to address under the umbrella of safe housing, including mental health issues and bureaucratic considerations, so to create this forum work Headlines cast a wide net to gather workshop participants (11).

After homelessness... was created in a similar way to previous Headlines' forum performances with a group of workshop participants being chosen to create the show with David Diamond. The large amount of interest for this project, 125 applicants according to Diamond's

final report, was the most of any Headlines call to that date.⁸ The interview process for *after homelessness...* was similar to that of *Here and Now*; Headlines spent four days going through 30 minute interviews with each of the 42 successful candidates for the workshop. People were cast based on these interviews before going into the workshop process so that the cast members and workshop participants could focus on creating dialogue and really exploring the issues during this time instead of ‘auditioning’ to be part of the cast. Diamond expressed in his final report that “some of the casting choices were clear” (14), and immediately chose four actors for the project. The goal for the show had been originally to have six actors, but once they began casting, finding the other two became complicated. In the final report, Diamond indicates that there were many casting conflicts and argued that this was one element suggestive of the complex and, in some cases, particularly sensitive issues being explored in *after homelessness...*

The accumulation of these problems resulted in a workshop and creation process that was a bit more complicated than many of Headlines’ previous shows. Economic and health vulnerabilities shaped the participants’ lives and this was particularly so as the show ran during the height of the flu pandemic of 2009. In addition, the workshop process conformed to a traditional theatre rehearsal schedule, one that did not fit easily into the participants’ lives. As Diamond notes in his final report, “[d]uring the creation and rehearsal process all of the complexities of the issues in the emerging play were in the rehearsal hall: addiction; an inability to deal with structure; various mental health issues” (5). As a result of these issues, there were actors who more than once would fail to show up for a rehearsal. His final report from the show noted that this had a significant impact on the development of the production and carried into the

⁸ In the live webcast Diamond also mentions 125 applications.

final performance period when eventually one lead cast member had to be replaced the day before opening.

Although the creation of the play was complicated, it grew nonetheless into a 30 minute piece over two weeks. A cast member who had been let go at the end of the workshop was replaced by another actress; however, after circumstances were investigated further she was invited to return to the project. This confirmed the cast at six people, the original goal for the project; however, during the course of rehearsals, two further cast members were replaced. Further, on the first day of the show one of the replacements failed to show up and was in turn replaced, this time by the support worker for the project, since it was so close to the show being presented for an audience. The debate about whether the cast member who missed the first show should rejoin the cast during the run became a struggle that Diamond and the rest of the cast and support team had to manage together. In the end, the support wound up in the role for the duration of the run, but this situation on top of everything else in terms of casting was significant to the overall shape of the performance.

The show follows the lives of six characters as they experience various avenues to finding safe housing opportunities, each defining what this means in individual ways.⁹ The character of Otis lives in a tent beside a construction development; Nico, his friend, has just been accepted into a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) dwelling and dealing with this as a transition from living on the street. Three characters live in the SRO, Shauna, Cloud and Katie, while the last character, Bob, is struggling to pay his rent and has just been evicted from his apartment in downtown Vancouver. There are three additional characters that round out the script, each are played by actors already assigned to one of the six main roles. The actor playing Cloud doubles

⁹ Following Diamond's respect for the actors' anonymity I have included only the character names in this summary and not the names of the actors that defined each role.

as Frank, a security guard that interacts with Otis; the actor playing Bob depicts a cop in the final scene with Otis; the actor playing Shauna also portrays Adel, an employee with BC Housing services who interacts with Katie. Each character has a different journey but at some point all of their lives intersect.

While the show ran from November 20th- December 6th, 2009, my analysis is limited to a recording of the forum performance that took place on November 29 at the Firehall Arts Centre in Vancouver, BC. David Diamond introduced the play as the Joker, and set out the guidelines for this forum both for the live audience and the online viewers. As in *Here and Now*, he noted the differences in how each person would intervene, and also noted the casting changes in the script before the performance began. *After homelessness...* had two primary sets with complementary action happening in and around these spaces. There was a Single Room Occupancy (SRO) housing unit with four rooms and a kitchen and living area on stage left, and an alley with a tarp-tent set up on stage right. The kitchen in the SRO doubled as an office building for one scene, while other action occurred around the alley as general outdoor and establishing scenes with one scene even taking an actor into the audience space to establish it as a different part of the city.

After homelessness... begins with Otis outside of his tent dwelling discovering a posting on his tarp demanding he relocate, a message which he discards hastily. The scene then switches to the SRO where Katie is looking through the classifieds for new houses and exchanges comments with fellow tenant, Shauna, about wanting to get out. Nico soon enters the playing space and voices her concern to stay sober, a goal she feels is threatened if the housing she moves to has people ‘shooting up outside’. Reluctantly, she enters the SRO since that is all she has been offered and encounters Katie and Shauna sitting at the kitchen table. After a cold

greeting, Nico inquires about her new room and Shauna reveals that the previous occupant committed suicide. This causes Nico to react strongly with disgust which in turn offends Shauna as the deceased was her friend and despite Nico's apology, she leaves angry. Cloud then enters the living room to greet Nico and officially introduce himself and the other tenants of the SRO unit. He tells her that he can get her drugs if she needs them and Nico states that she stopped using a month ago, which he commends. Nico leaves after meeting all three of these tenants and remarks on her way out just how awful the SRO feels.

Bob then enters, talking on his cell phone to his landlord Sylvia about his rent being due. He makes another phone call to his friend who has stood him up at a bar and leaves a message pleading for him to help since the money he is owed will pay his rent this month. Bob has made his way to stage right where Otis has overheard the conversation from his tent. Bob then takes some lithium pills and swigs back some whiskey, and Otis comments that he should be eating at the same time. Otis turns down a drink and instead comments that Bob should get some help which leads to an altercation between the two. Bob leaves and the scene shifts back to the SRO where Cloud and Shauna are having a heated conversation in which Shauna is insisting that she needs some drugs to get her through the night. Katie expresses concern over Cloud's dealing and offers to help him out, "Cloud you're my street son, we're family, families help each other out" (18:12). Katie tells him that she has a meeting at the housing office that day, which means soon they will have a real home. Cloud says that the SRO is his home and denies her plea for his support at the meeting stating "that's your... dream and this is my reality" (18:45).

At Katie's meeting with Adel in the housing office a glitch with her original application is revealed which means that she is no longer on the list. This causes Katie great concern as she insists she went through weeks of paperwork and meetings just to get on the list in the first place

and it has been months now so she should be near the top already instead of having to start all over again. Katie leaves the office and the scene shifts to Otis' tent where he is approached by his friend Nico. They discuss Nico's new living arrangements at the SRO and she expresses her concern about the prevalence of drugs and hard conditions, to which Otis optimistically remarks "you know you're stronger than that..." (21:39). Nico and Otis then share a piece of toast that Otis has made in his toaster with electricity he is 'jacking' from a nearby construction site. Nico reveals that she has stolen some sheets for her new place which elicits a reprimand from Otis since she is still on probation and he does not want to see her return to jail. Nico seems to sense that Otis is having a bad day, which he claims is the result of Bob getting in his space earlier, and she offers to stay at the tent with him. Otis says that Nico has a home now to which she states "that place is not a home, you've got a home here" (23:38). This scene ends with Nico promising she will not jack things anymore and will stay in her place every night, while Otis is mad at himself for not telling Nico the truth that he has been ordered to vacate his tent.

The next scene starts with Bob being banned kicked out of a bar in which he is a regular and encountering Cloud outside of the SRO. Bob tells Cloud that "as of tonight I got no place" (25:27) and Cloud offers to let him inside. Bob and Cloud discuss the state of the SRO, or "home sweet hell" (26:20) as Cloud calls it. Bob and Shauna share a drink and Bob tells them that he has been kicked out of his apartment and needs a bed to stay in. The group is interrupted by an outburst from Nico who shouts that her mattress has a bug infestation, which causes Katie to enter the living area after hearing all the commotion. Nico is forced back into her room with the mattress by the other two women and Katie is then introduced to Bob who offers her a drink. Cloud remarks that Katie is sober, but after her hard day at the housing office she accepts the drink from Bob. Bob is told he can sleep on the couch and during the night we see Shauna come

out of her room lamenting the death of her friend. She sees Bob on the couch and notices his bag which has money in it which she can use to get crack. When Bob awakes the next day to find his bag stolen he wakes everyone up freaking out that everything has been taken including his money and his pills. He accuses Cloud of stealing his bag and he denies it but Katie says that Shauna would steal it. Shauna enters the living area and is confronted by Bob who insists that he get his bag back, she can keep the money he just needs his pills back. He tries to enter her room and Cloud stops him threatening him with a chair. Bob gets kicked out of the SRO and runs away screaming without any of his things. The scene shifts to Otis waking up in his tarp shelter and being greeted by Frankie who has come to follow up about the letter that had been posted on Otis' tent. Otis asserts that he is not leaving but Frankie has brought a cop who begins to pack up Otis' things. Frankie tries calmly to remove the tent but Otis keeps insisting "don't touch my home" (35:05). He becomes belligerent and is tasered by the policeman when he will not back off. The policeman calls for an ambulance and arrests Otis.

Back in the SRO, Nico packs up to leave. Cloud comes in and asks what is wrong. Nico states that she cannot stay anymore, she just found out that her friend Otis has died after being tasered by a cop. Cloud realizes that this is the same Otis that he spent two years with in jail, which prompts him to reach out to Nico "you Otis' family, you my family" (38:21). Nico insists that she cannot stay in the SRO even though Katie and Cloud say that they can take care of each other if they stick together. They say that the streets are unsafe with dirty rigs and people dying, while Nico says that she sees both of those things in the SRO as well, to her it is death and not the streets. Nico leaves. Katie and Cloud are left sitting in the kitchen as Shauna approaches. The play concludes with Katie leaving in disgust as Shauna begs for Cloud to help her out with some drugs "just one more time.. just one more time.." (40:01).

Once the first part of the forum concluded, Diamond re-entered the space and set up the audience for the intervention part of the performance. As with *Here and Now*, the interventions took place out of succession with certain scenes being skipped to guide the audience's choices for interaction. Technologically, a simple change that was made to this performance, in contrast to *Here and Now*, was the use of microphones attached to sashes instead of hand held ones, signifying a growth in the overall format of Headlines' webcast process. Diamond notes in his book that the inspiration for this change came from a suggestion by the artistic director of a TO company in the Netherlands called Formaat, Luc Opdebeeck, after he watched the webcast of *Here and Now* (290). The integration of the sash microphone meant Diamond no longer had to follow the intervener around with a handheld microphone in order to capture the sound. Without the added element of Diamond needing to be present in the acting space in order to ensure sound would be recorded for the broadcast, both spectators and interveners could focus more on the immediate details of the moment.

The perceived freedom from technological constraints on behalf of the interveners may have facilitated many of the interactive elements of the forum performance; however, larger technical problems complicated this dynamic for the broadcast as a whole. The microphones that were being used during the show kept cutting out and made it difficult to hear certain moments of the dialogue. The contrast between these two elements of digital media, its ease of use versus its faulty performance, highlights the crossover between the two different definitions of interactive within this type of forum theatre. The sash-microphones facilitated the interactive communication between the intervener and actor on stage while also allowing this freedom to contribute positively to the flow and reception of the action on stage.

There were ten interventions in the play, including a total of three from online viewers in Australia. Two examples that came via the online audience will help to further the discussion of changes and technological possibilities for these performances when compared to *Here and Now*. While there were no interventions that included both those from the physical and online spaces, each intervention offered a different dimension to the performance since Diamond would ask the audience for policy suggestions inspired by what was just showcased on stage. These direct questions and responses to the intervention allowed more of the audience in the physical theatre space to participate and contribute dialogue about the issues being presented. This element to Headlines' TFL performances is part of Diamond's application of Boal's Legislative Theatre practice. The policy suggestions or comments that come from audience members after the interventions are written down by a community scribe, who then forwards the document to local government officials. In this way, Headlines sees the dialogue generated by the forum theatre event as contributing to policy making and change at a municipal level. While a scribe was present at both *Here and Now* and *after homelessness...*, the open reflection and responsive discussion after each intervention was not present in the former. I believe that a contributing factor to the amount of free flowing dialogue in *after homelessness...* could have been the lack of a time restriction on its broadcast. *Here and Now* was being broadcast simultaneously on television, and as such, needed to fit precisely into the allocated 2 hours for its time slot; however, *after homelessness...*, was only broadcast on the internet, and while it still needed to maintain a reasonable theatre length, was less hindered by this external factor.

A viewer of the webcast, Claudia in Sydney, Australia, chose to intervene as Otis in the scene with Nico outside his tarp. The web-actor Seth stepped in for her, and, after hearing that

Nico felt frightened in her new place, offered to go with her.¹⁰ This turned out to be something Nico had been wanting for a long time and was immediately accepted; however, this would result in Otis packing up his stuff and leaving his home. The actor playing Nico felt very positive about this choice and that the chance just to spend one night talking about Otis' options and keeping her company could send them both on a very different track. The sacrifice that Otis was making in this scene to leave his home seemed to be very drastic, as the previous action demonstrated by this character showed a clear attachment to his tarp. While bringing up some complicated actions that would have had to occur in this moment, the intervention nonetheless prompted a discussion of SRO policies and the feasibility of this choice for both characters.

Another intervention that came via a web-actor was from a viewer in Brisbane, Australia named Deanna. Deanna made the choice to replace Nico as she entered the SRO for the first time. The web-actor, Marquette, entered the SRO and immediately said hello to Katie sitting at the table. This elicited the same greeting and Nico continued to introduce herself to the two women and tried to get a feel for the place. She and Katie had a relatively balanced conversation and instead of Katie remarking on Nico's attitude they seemed to start off on a good foot. In the breakdown of the intervention Diamond asked the web-actor if she thinks Deanna is getting what she wants out of this scene and Marquette said yes; "it's connection, to be part of the community rather than being excluded again" (54:32). He then asked what it was about this version of Nico that changed how Katie reacted; "This Nico comes in and actually has a smile on her face... this one is a little bit more forward" (54:46). The actor originally portraying Nico mentioned fear and intimidation as two reasons why this is not the reaction she had upon entering the SRO.

¹⁰ This is Seth Ranawerra, the actor who played Sunny in *Here and Now*. He was part of this production as a web-actor.

After hearing all three women speak about the intervention, Diamond then turns to Marquetta and addresses her as Deanna, the intervener from Australia, to get her opinion on the intervention, specifically whether it met all of her intended goals. In this address to the web-actor he makes the following comment, “I know you’re not Deanna, but here you are, [*addressing audience*] until we have holograms, it’s like this” (55:58). This moment is significant in its ability to highlight a critical part of the unique interactive process that is taking place in these broadcast forum performances. The web-actor has become the embodiment of another individual’s ideas in the physical theatre space and for the processes of creating dialogue contributes on behalf of someone displaced from the room. Until technology evolves enough to allow a person to represent themselves easily in physical action among the scene, Headlines is relying on the web-actor’s brief encounter with the viewer in a chat space to gain enough understanding of their suggestion to represent their ideas as accurately as possible. This places a large responsibility on the web-actor, who Diamond questions as the intervener in each scene, to respond as best they can to the original intent of the suggestion. Since the process that the actor has just undergone in the space required spontaneous reaction to what they were given by the other characters, it invites the question, what line can we draw between the web-actor, and the original idea for an intervention? The mediated nature of the relationship between the online viewer and the web-actor not only opens up questions about embodiment as previously discussed, but also about empowerment since this form of online relationship distances the online viewer and limits her capacity to follow up quickly with the implications of her suggestion.

Embodiment, as noted in chapter one, is a large factor to consider in the overall scope of Theatre for Living since the original mandate of TO work, upon which TfL is based, actually

posits the spect-actor on stage physically enacting alternatives to oppression as a key element of its overall technique. By embodying new outcomes to overcome oppression, the spect-actor gains a sense of empowerment in a very visceral way and therefore is more attuned to their surroundings and better prepared to extrapolate these actions to enact this change in the real world. While the experience of a spect-actor in Diamond's work is not as focused on their individual response, as much as it is the overall communication that develops through the forum process, the issue of embodiment is still relevant to a discussion of theatre when considered in relation to increasing use of digital media. How can the physical requirements of forum theatre still speak to individual audience experiences if the virtual viewer is not physically present and does not embody the changes he or she seeks? Will holograms be the ultimate solution to this issue, as Diamond's quote might suggest, or is the simple fact that the online viewer is engaged in creating a dialogue enough to fulfill the mandate of Headlines' work? While neither of these questions can yet be answered in any definitive way, they both open up the space to discuss the progress of this technology so far and suggest how it might further evolve to serve this form.

The digital media components of *Here and Now* and *after homelessness...* attempt to fulfill a desire within Diamond's forum theatre to reach beyond the physical confines the theatre space and include a wider audience within the conversation created by TfL. By investigating the key technology in these two case studies, we have seen how they were able to do so, but also noted the complicated dynamic created by such inclusion. In both case studies the company seems to have been less interested in maximizing the interactive potential of the digital technologies it employed than in using these technologies to afford a broader geographical range and number of viewers to participate in the more standard flow of its TfL practice. However, as

Headlines continues to move forward with its forum theatre practices, precedent suggest that they will continue to incorporate and evolve these online aspects as well.

CONCLUSION

I began this thesis by citing David Diamond who suggested that his desire to expand the scope of Theatre for Living's practice through digital communication has not yet been fully met by technology. Diamond has been clear that his primary desire with TfL is to use theatre as a space for facilitating healing processes and open communication. Acknowledging many of Capra's 'systems view' concepts, he sees TfL as an integral part of developing and maintaining healthy communities which are, in essence, self-generating systems. On the basis of this understanding, Diamond has explained his impulse to use technology in his book by arguing that "individual communities are part of even larger living organisms that comprise the human community that spans the planet" (295). By using digital media to reach out beyond the physical confines of the local theatre space, he aims to include a larger, potentially worldwide audience in TfL's processes and communications.

In my reading of his basic model of TfL I have tended to agree with two of Diamond's core contentions. First, I agree that communication can help heal communities. Second, I believe that theatre can be a useful tool to facilitate this communication. With Headlines Theatre, Diamond has created a kind of forum theatre that can build from local events to connect to communities within Canada and beyond. However, I have been interested in questioning how Diamond's use of digital technology has complicated and challenged the core processes and practices of this TfL forum work. If you accept Diamond's assertion that theatre is a primal language, then theatrical expression and communication is paramount to facilitating dialogue and understanding between human beings. However, interaction in theatre is changed by the incorporation of digital media since the technology filters, distances, and divides different kinds of audience participation.

This investigation has turned primarily around two case studies whose respective uses of digital technology to involve audience members at a geographical remove from the live performers provide ways to think about how such technology recasts and challenges some of the original practices of TfL forum theatre. I have been interested to learn how this technology has both served and inhibited the forum event. Following Diamond's question, I have sought to understand the gap between technology and desire. *Here and Now* and *after homelessness...* suggest a range of the impulses and trends within Headlines' digitally broadcast performances. These shows explore the changing landscape of Diamond's practice and highlight how he is working towards achieving his desires for forum theatre broadcasts. I have identified the specific elements of these events and analysed the layered ways they have complicated the TfL forum theatre dynamic. I have been particularly interested to show how the roles of both the mid-point Joker and the web-actor complicate the interaction between viewers and performers that occurs via computer screen and influences the online audiences' reception of the event. Through this discussion I also opened up space to question the practical implementation of technology in terms of the ultimate desire of forum theatre broadcasts.

The two case studies provide a snapshot of forum practice in a particular technological moment. With just over two decades of popular access to the World Wide Web, the integration of online technologies into daily life and cultural practices is still in the early stages of its development. Theatre for Living has moved to incorporate these technologies and it is interesting to note that while these two case studies were only four years apart, they employed different technological means to include live viewers outside the physical space of the forum theatre onsite event audience. The shift from simulcast television broadcasts and communication via telephones to the use of multiple chat windows and real-time video feeds via the internet

suggests how far Headlines' practice has come since its first incorporation of televised broadcasts in 1989. David Diamond and his company have utilized basic technological tools in an attempt to disseminate and transform their particular brand of forum theatre. This progression speaks to the company's drive to stay connected with the changing communication practices and develop new methods for evolving its practice in this context.

As I noted in the case study, David Diamond joked in *after homelessness...* about the potential use of holograms as a solution for some of the challenges and filters currently influencing Headlines' forum broadcasts. While the statement was playful, the sentiment pointed to further technological innovations that might enhance this particular type of forum work. However, even the use of holograms would bring forward similar complicating elements by the fact that the projection of the intervener would still be a filter between his or her personal experience and reaction to the forum event. A hologram would ideally create a likeness of the individual within the physical theatre space with whom performers and audiences could immediately communicate, but it would still be simply an avatar for the material human being who is displaced from the live performance environment. In this scenario, the distance dividing the geographically removed audience member from the physical theatre space would still be prominent and all of the complications around embodiment, immediacy, and liveness would continue to introduce further layers of complexity between different orders of audience experience and spect-actor involvement.

The case studies demonstrate how using different communication technologies in TfL introduces varied orders of participation in the forum event. The tools that are currently in place to facilitate Headlines' broadcast performances filter online audiences' interaction through both computers and people. Dixon's four tiered analysis of interactivity offered a framework through

which to address this process. His examination of the myriad of digital performance practitioners and theories also helped to contextualize my work within the scope of current trends and definitions within this diverse field.

To conclude this thesis, I wish to draw attention back to the core mandate of Headlines Theatre, storytelling and communication. The possibilities created by broadcasts to include a far reaching audience within the generative dialogue of forum performance are quite innovative. They add further dimensions to Boal's groundbreaking TO work and fit into the scope of TfL's mandate and evolving practices providing, in Diamond's words, "a vehicle for living communities to tell their stories" (*Theatre* 23). These forum events still face many challenges in terms of their application and reception beyond the physical theatre space, but the company is continuing to adapt and transform in order to accomplish new goals. At the core of TfL practice is a tension between intense engagement with local communities and a firm sense of the web of global connections that shape these local networks. Digital technologies which link the local TfL performance event to individuals and communities beyond the live performance site highlight this tension, its ideal generative communication, and practical limits. If Headlines can continue to facilitate an open and responsive dialogue with the changing environment and digital media elements of its work, then the restrictions of such tools need not be viewed as a limitation. Instead, they offer a challenging and dynamic way to think about how TfL, and by extension, forum theatre might function on a global scale and bring this 'primal language' a new outlet for its communication and reception. In this way, Headlines Theatre's forum broadcasts have potential to develop alongside digital technologies and, in doing so, re-imagine the strengths and possibilities for human communication that "spans the planet".

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