

Live Performance in VR

Live performance in virtual reality by creators from different metaverses discuss the challenges and advantages of performance in this new storytelling platform.

Stephen G. Butchko
Ferryman Collective
sgbutchko@gmail.com

Deirdre V. Lyons
Ferryman Collective
DeirdreVLyons@gmail.com

Jason Moore
Institution Jason Moore Productions,
The MetaMovie
jason@themetamovie.com

Brendan Bradley
The Jigsaw Ensemble
brendanAbradley@gmail.com

Tanya Leal Soto
Nexus Studios
tanyalealsoto@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Virtual reality is a growing platform for live entertainment, offering the feeling of embodiment and immersion that is central to storytelling for both audience and performers. Find out how several different artists are bringing the magic of theater to digital playhouses around the world.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Computing methodologies** → Computer graphics; Graphics systems and interfaces; Virtual reality; • **Human-centered computing** → Human computer interaction (HCI); Interaction paradigms; Virtual reality.

KEYWORDS

Performance, Theater, Immersive, Virtual Reality

ACM Reference Format:

Stephen G. Butchko, Deirdre V. Lyons, Jason Moore, Brendan Bradley, and Tanya Leal Soto. 2021. Live Performance in VR: Live performance in virtual reality by creators from different metaverses discuss the challenges and advantages of performance in this new storytelling platform.. In *Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques Conference (SIGGRAPH '21 Panels)*, August 09–13, 2021, Virtual Event, USA. ACM, New York, NY, USA, 2 pages. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3450617.3464495>

1 INTRODUCTION

We've heard it many times before 'VR is the future!' But what does that even mean, especially since it has been bandied about for over a decade now. The future of what? Acting, storytelling, education, gaming? Well, yes, and more. Certainly, Virtual Reality will never replace what already exists, even during these uncertain times as we navigate a novel coronavirus that has kept us all social distanced, as we find a way to come back and congregate at theaters and gatherings. We are social creatures, after all. Theater will come back,

Permission to make digital or hard copies of part or all of this work for personal or classroom use is granted without fee provided that copies are not made or distributed for profit or commercial advantage and that copies bear this notice and the full citation on the first page. Copyrights for third-party components of this work must be honored. For all other uses, contact the owner/author(s).

SIGGRAPH '21 Panels, August 09–13, 2021, Virtual Event, USA

© 2021 Copyright held by the owner/author(s).

ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-8370-7/21/08.

<https://doi.org/10.1145/3450617.3464495>

concerts, schools, gatherings, will come back, but this pandemic will have unexpected consequence of accelerated this technological platform of storytelling, entertainment, education and social connection, virtual reality.

For the general public who have never been in a headset, this may still seem like a far-off concept, something that's for gamers. But for those of us who inhabit the world of technology, we know that VR is like the 20's for film, or the 70's for computers, it's the wild west anything is possible as artist and technicians explore the capacity of these new devices. When films were invented, people thought, Well, this is cool. . .but what do you do with it? How long should a movie be? What is the best way to tell a story? How do we get sound in there? It took a hundred years to get where we are now with fast cuts, soundtracks, and CGI. The same with computers, and now almost every home has one. These are all tools, and it takes some time to figure out all the uses a tool may have.

The panel will be moderated by producer and performer, Stephen Butchko of the Ferryman Collective and will be accompanied by panelists who all have practical knowledge of producing live theater, either on one of the different social VR platforms; VRChat, Neos, Mozilla Hubs or by creating on a standalone application.

They will discuss multiple topics surrounding the opportunities and challenges of producing live theater in VR, including:

- What you can do in VR Performances that you can't do in real life.
- Transitioning performances into VR.
- The Audience for VR performances and accessibility.
- Getting to this future.
- Providing real world examples of navigating this increasingly popular art form.

We are natural storytellers; it is at the core of our nature, and now, there is a new technology that allows us to tell those stories in a unique way. That feels more alive and visceral. That allows us to be almost anywhere in the world and feel like we are standing in a room together. There are exciting new opportunities being created, both in Live VR theater as well as recorded VR films, shorts and more as VR producers join this new creative platform every day.

2 MODERATOR

Stephen Butchko received his Bachelor of Arts degree in theatre from Western Washington University. After moving to Los Angeles,

he began producing and performing in independent theatrical and motion picture productions with his wife Deirdre V. Lyons. As a founding member of the Ferryman Collective, Stephen recently made the transition to producing and performing in Virtual Reality in *PARA* and *Krampusnacht*, finalist for the PGA Innovation Award. Their current production, *The Severance Theory: Welcome to Respite*, had its world premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival.

3 PANELISTS

Deirdre V. Lyons began her VR work in two 180 films, *The Willows* and *Freakin' Weekend*. She joined the ensemble cast of *The Under Presents*, an immersive theater experience in VR, Winner of the VR Awards Experience of the Year, and another Shakespearean production by the same studio, *Tender Claws, The Under Presents: Tempest*, which won Best Narrative Experience at the Raindance Film Festival. She was a principal performer in *Finding Pandora X* by Double Eye Studios, Winner of Best Immersive Experience in Venice VR Expanded. She is a founding member of Ferryman Collective where she produced and performed in the VR immersive experiences *PARA*, *Krampusnacht*, and *The Severance Theory: Welcome to Respite*.

Jason Moore is a cross-platform writer, producer and director and has worked extensively in the film and television production industry. His films *Paradise*, *Nebraska*, *Animals*, and *American Seoul* have won awards and been screened in over sixty film festivals. *Paradise, Nebraska* was distributed to multiple television outlets including The Sundance Channel. He has directed broadcast television commercials around the world, working with agencies such as DraftFCB, BBDO, DDB, Attik, and JWT. He has television directing credits on *Animal Planet* and *Discovery*. His recent work in VR, *Alien Rescue*, won a Special Mention at the 77th Venice International Film Festival.

Brendan Bradley is a multi-award-winning actor and creator with over 100 IMDb film and television credits and over 50 million online views, opposite some of the biggest names online. As a scrappy storyteller, Brendan is a champion of new tools and techniques, including his own Lab at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts for integrating emerging technologies in live performance and supporting the next generation of multi-disciplinary storytellers. During the pandemic, Brendan began releasing free tutorials and case-studies for adopting ubiquitous streaming tools for live performance, including a customizable virtual theater that allows anyone in the world to perform for their own live, virtual audience for free.

Mexican American director, producer, and content creator. Tanya Leal Soto is currently an Interactive Producer at Nexus Studios a film and interactive studio creating innovative experiences for entertainment, art and branded content where she produces projects in emerging technologies exploring how these new forms of storytelling are changing the way we interact and connect with the world. Before that she was the Producer for Art & Tech Studio *Tender Claws*, creators of award-winning VR games *The Under Presents*, *The Tempest*, *Virtual*, *Virtual Reality* and *AR app tender*. All of these were longform narrative projects in XR which deeply marry form and content.

4 PERFORMANCE

Those wishing to experience an example of live immersive performance in VR may visit the panelist website www.WelcometoRespite.com for tickets, using the discount code exclusive to Siggraph attendees: SIG2021.