The Decline in Popularity and Social Influence of Live Theatre in Exchange for “Electronic Theatre”

Presentation by Bradley Fox
Faculty Mentors: Andrew Harris, PhD
and Timothy Wilson, PhD
Important Definitions

- **Live Theatre**- any live theatrical performance that is performed in front of a live audience by a cast of live actors and a crew of live technicians

- **Electronic Theatre**- anything that requires an electronic device in order for a person to experience a theatrical performance or event.
  - Examples: Movies, television, film, digital recordings, videos and animation, and computer-based video-viewing display programs such as from [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com)
The Problem

• Live Theatre and Electronic Theatre have always competed for popularity and the greater influence on society

• For my thesis, I argue that in today’s society, Live Theatre is being eclipsed in both aspects by Electronic Theatre.
Research Questions

• Why is Electronic Theatre becoming so popular and influential in today’s society?
• Will Live Theatre become obsolete in the 21st Century?
  – How could Live Theatre change in order to compete with Electronic Theatre today?
Literature Review

• Jenkins argues that such competition between Live Theatre and Electronic Theatre started with the rise of talking motion pictures and radio after 1927 (Jenkins 196).

• Saltz believes that theatre directors could use 21st Century technology to better aid Live Theatre not hinder it (Saltz 107).
Literature Review Continued

- Saltz warns; however, if these new technologies are over-utilized, then the role of actors will become obsolete therefore changing traditional Live Theatre forever (Saltz 109)
- Gharavi recognizes how easy anyone can produce and distribute Electronic Theatre in today’s society calling it the “democratization of media”
  - Gharavi describes it as one of the most notable developments in the Western culture during the last decade (Gharavi 224).
Methodology

- It will consist of two parts
  - One part is based on qualitative research
  - The other part is based on quantitative research
For the Qualitative Research, I Will…

• Continue my research for literature that would support my argument
  • Dr. Harris is currently writing a book about Broadway that could be beneficial to my research

• Interview experts that would support my argument
  • Dr. Harris will provide the contact information

• Enroll in THEA-4390 *Theatre for Social Change*
  – Dr. Wilson will be teaching this class during the Fall 2009
For the Quantitative Research, I Will…

• Write and distribute a Survey Questionnaire to local theater audiences prior to the theater’s showing of their play
  – The audience and audience size would vary depending on both the size and quality of the theater
    • Risk to the participants would be minimal
  – I will analyze the data to search for a statistical pattern that would support or refute my argument
For the Quantitative Research, I Will...

- Review yearly attendance records of local theaters of varying size and quality looking for a steady decline in theater attendance.
  - The theaters reviewed will vary from the small budgeted community theaters to the professional higher-budgeted theaters such as the Dallas Theater Center and Casa Mañana.
For the Quantitative Research, I Will...

• Review the yearly attendance records for local Symphony Orchestras and Opera Houses looking for a steady decline in recital attendance.

• This will serve as a control group for my quantitative research
The Questionnaire

• The written Questionnaire would consist of 50 multiple choice questions asking the participant…
  – How often he or she would watch a live theatrical event versus an electronically theatrical event
    – For example:
      1. How often do you watch TV?
      2. How often do you watch a live theatrical play?
      3. How often do you go see a movie at a movie theater?
  – Why he or she would watch one event more than another.
    – For example:
      1. True/False: I do not usually see a play in my community unless one of my friends or family members are performing there.
The Questionnaire Continued

• The Questionnaire would also ask the participant questions that would measure the social impact that Live Theatre has on the person versus Electronic Theatre

  – Example:

   1. Which of the following places would you say has the greatest influence on you in terms of your views on Politics?

   2. Which of the following would best describe why your previous answer was so effective in influencing you in Politics?

   3. Which of the following places would you say had the greatest influence on you in terms of Religion and Morality?
## Timeline

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Future Plans

• UNT Scholars Day
  – April 2, 2009

• Thesis Paper published in *The Eagle Feather*
  – Spring 2010
Bibliography


Image Credits

• Advanced Motion Controls. **Advanced Motion Controls.** 2005. 19 November 2008 <http://www.a-mc.com/content/m101/industry_highlight/entertainment.html>.

Questions & Comments?

Have a Nice Day!