

“Raving the Real: Authenticity and Digital Performance in Caridad Svich’s *Iphigenia...*”
by Lance Gharavi and Jake Pinholster

Abstract

For many practitioners and some theorists, Western theatre locates itself as a site of the authentic within the authenticity-challenged domain of late-capitalism. From this viewpoint, theatrical practice becomes a potentially effective mode of resistance, opposing itself (as it does) to an intensifying Baudrillardian hyper-reality in general, and to the proliferation of electronic and digital media specifically.

From this perspective, digital media enter the theatre like thieves into the temple—as a threat to the theatre’s special ontological and political status. When this occurs, the already troubled status of authenticity in the theatre becomes more troubled, still.

In staging Caridad Svich’s play, *Iphigenia Crash Land Falls on the Neon Shell that was Once Her Heart (a rave fable)*, director Lance Gharavi and media designer/scenographer Jake Pinholster faced the challenges of creating a new and hybrid form of performance that mixed the de-centered, free-form structure of a rave with the narrative demands of traditional theatre—all in a media-saturated, immersive, and interactive environment where the line between actor and technician, as well as the line between spectator and performer, was deliberately troubled.

In this presentation, Gharavi and Pinholster discuss the challenges they faced, the answers they developed, and the failures they encountered in critiquing and querying issues of authenticity on the stage through the design of space, time, and media.

Bios

Lance Gharavi is a theatre/performance artist, scholar, co-founder of the Institute for the Exploration of Virtual Realities (i.e. VR) at the University of Kansas, and one of the early pioneers in the field of digital performance. His work has appeared on stages, screens, and in journals throughout the US and Europe. Currently an Assistant Professor in the School of Theatre and Film at Arizona State University, Gharavi’s work focuses on the many intersections of performance, technology, politics, and religion.

Jake Pinholster is Assistant Professor of Media Design at Arizona State University in the School of Theatre and Film, one of the first design training programs in the country to offer a chance to specialize in media design for live performance. Last year he was nominated for a Hewes Design Award for his work on the Les Freres production of *Boozy*. Other projects include: *Dixie’s Tupperware Party* (Ars Nova), David Dorfman Dance’s *underground* (BAM), *HeddaTRON* (Les Freres Corbusier), *Current Nobody* (La Jolla Playhouse), *My Renaissance Faire Lady* (Ontological-Hysteric), *Voyage of the Carcass* (Greenwich Street).

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