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Another Language Performing Arts Company: Going live, digitally

Multimedia performance » 'InterPlay: Event Horizon' dresses up dance, and animation, and music, and cinematography, all in high-definition.

By Ben Fulton
The Salt Lake Tribune

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If you've never seen anything like this performance in your entire life, then Jimmy and Elizabeth Miklavcic, the husband-and-wife team behind Another Language Performing Arts Company, will be happy.

They describe "InterPlay: Event Horizon" as a live performance melding dance, poetry, music, animation, cinematography and the latest in digital video streaming technology, which connects a variety of performers from all over the world via the Internet.

Sound heady? It is. This unique production makes no excuses for bringing together art forms that, on first glance, have no business sharing the same room. It's bold. It's dense. It's not shy on ambitions, either. According to press materials, "InterPlay" promises "an experience for the explorer to revel in the discovery of what is just beyond sight or knowledge."

With a 25-year company history and years of performance experience using the latest technology available, the Miklavcics are expert hands.

Perhaps the only element holding "InterPlay: Event Horizon" back is its 30-minute running time, which rewards concentration over duration. That, and the occasional Internet connection snafu. Once, several years ago, a backhoe severed a fiber link in Alaska by accident during an "InterPlay" performance, but even that didn't stop the show.

"A key component is the tenuous nature of these performances," said Elizabeth Miklavcic. "Networking is networking. It can do anything."

In a run-up to upcoming performances, Elizabeth Milavcic talked about Another Language's work:

This is the eighth InterPlay project you and your husband have produced. What keeps you coming back to a production of this nature?

It's an evolution. You have to keep exploring new things. When we moved out of our studio space in 1995, we were interested in exploring proscenium stages, or larger performance venues. We could either grow bigger, or grow in a different direction. It doesn't seem that long ago that we created a Web site as a venue in 1995. When we started moving in that direction, it was odd for a lot of people. They didn't know what we were talking about at all. When we first investigated streaming video, it was the size of a postage stamp. Last year was our first time using high-definition video. This year will be our first time using high-definition projectors.

This year's "InterPlay" performance connects a guitarist and dancer from Salt Lake City with a writer in Alaska and a computer animator in Tokyo. What kind of barriers do you think this performance crosses?

We get to meet with a variety of artists and technologists around the world by performing this project. The ability to create a multilayered cinematic performance is the next step. It's about exploration. It's about the research of trying out new ideas and new ways of expressing art. Our performance is really a different mode of communication, and the communication aspect of performance.

It all sounds like brief yet dense experience. Have you ever had people come up to asking for a recording of the performance?

Yes, but the final representation on DVD is not what people would see in the auditorium. It's an edited version. When people watch this, they forget it's all being streamed live. They think it's all a movie, but it's not. Our audience members are adventurous people who often say they had no idea this type of performance even existed. That's why we always hold an audience discussion afterward, because we get a lot of questions.

It almost sounds like a "kitchen sink" production of performance art where nothing is left out. Have any audience members passed out or fainted during a production?

No, but we've had a couple of people report migraines. It's a lot of information, and a lot of motion going on.

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Artistic exploration

Another Language Performing Arts Company presents "InterPlay: Event Horizon."

When » March 28 at 4 p.m.; April 2 at 1 and 7 p.m.; April 3 at 7 p.m.

Where » Intermountain Network and Scientific Computation Center, 155 S. 1452 East, University of Utah campus, Salt Lake City

Info » Free for students with valid ID; \$7 (\$5 for seniors) at the door. Call 801-531-9419 or 801-585-9335 for more information, or visit www.anotherlanguage.org/interplay/008_horizon.

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