

**The Role of the Performer  
Within  
The InterPlay Process**

Reflections of Citizenship  
InterPlay Participation History and  
Case Study: *Loose Minds in a Box*

By: Beth Miklavcic

**Abstract**

The artist/participant/performer within the InterPlay performance series holds an interesting position. One cannot be an active participant until there is an understanding of the technical equipment used to create the public performance. This includes knowledge of the Access Grid, telematics, camera techniques-including performing and lighting for the camera, and an awareness of how to work with sensitive audio equipment. In addition, the use of software applications and an awareness of the network infrastructure of Internet 2 must be learned. With all of that in mind, the artist must still be able to create a work that is relevant, makes a statement about our human condition, visually interesting, compelling for the live audience, and translates cinematically to the network audience viewing the performance from around the world.

This paper covers the history of the InterPlay performances beginning with *Intransitive Senses* 2003, *Hallucinations* 2004, to the most recent *Loose Minds in a Box* 2005. Creative springboards and the process of developing a work within a work as a contribution to the collaborative format are discussed.

Inspiration for Beth Miklavcic's recent work *Dressers* and the concept of abstraction within the examination of personality as applied to the idea of how one defines one's persona through dress and costuming is presented. The motivation for a series of characters and how they impacted the overall collaborative statement of the *InterPlay: Loose Minds in a Box* directed by Jimmy Miklavcic is covered.

The process of developing the April 2005 performance, our most ambitious project to date, which included sixteen video streams, seventeen artists, twenty-six technicians and performed simultaneously from a variety of locations throughout the country is discussed.

**InterPlay Concept and Brief History:**

*InterPlay* is a trademark performance format developed by Jimmy Miklavcic the Executive Director of *Another Language Performing Arts Company*. He has been researching the Access Grid Technology for over eight years, beginning in 1997. Five years into the research process the technology was stable enough to attempt a local in house performance using the Access Grid.

**Concept:**

Developed by Jimmy Miklavcic for our first *InterPlay: Intransitive Senses* performed April 19, 2003.

The word **interplay**, according to Webster's dictionary, is defined to mean *interaction*. For *Another Language* it describes the integration of the Internet and the process of playing, bringing into focus the act of playing on the Internet.

*InterPlay* is a multifaceted telematic event consisting of two or more performances that occur simultaneously at multiple sites throughout the world. The performances are concurrently captured, mixed, digitized, encoded and streamed onto the network. The director manipulates each video stream to appear in any of the video playback windows. This creates a work that takes individual events and weaves them into a multilayered distributed tapestry. Each artist has his/her thought process that leads to his/her artistic performance. The director moves that into another level by taking those performances and incorporating them into his own thought and creative process.

*InterPlay* should be viewed as a painting in motion. A myriad of colors, text, shapes and textures float about the framed video space to the resonance of sounds, music and words. Within these visual and audible constructions, stories hover and pass through the viewer's thoughts. Images of the performers add the human dimension to the visual fabric, allowing the viewer the possibility of a narrative, but stopping just short of telling an identifiable tale.

*InterPlay* is similar to the process that the brain performs during the formulation of a dream sequence. Images that have been stored through recent experiences simultaneously emerge in pieces and the brain mixes them into a surreal sequence that loosely resembles a story. Video streams being sent from several sites across the country and the world are then combined in a richly woven audio-visual experience.

**Research:**

The exciting thing about participating in the *InterPlays* and being a part of the Art on the Grid community is that it is truly about the research. There is a sense of searching and a sense of seeking. Working on projects is as much about the question as the answer. I don't feel as though anyone is trying to dictate what the "right" answer or "correct" answer is. The invigorating process of participation is the embracing of the question.

The process of muddling through issues and diving into the work gives us the opportunity to problem solve and work toward creating something of the best quality we can based on where we are at a specific moment in time.

**InterPlay History:**

The first *InterPlay* performance titled *Intransitive Senses* was April 19, 2003. It incorporated four performance streams from four locations on the first floor of the Center for High Performance Computing on the University of Utah campus. This included performances by musician and performance artist Flavia Cervino-Wood, musician and poet Harold Carr, sonosopher Alex Caldiero, performance artists Beth and Hanelle Miklavcic, and was directed by Jimmy Miklavcic. Sam Liston was our node operator and camera operators included Erik Brown, Brian Buck, Shawn Lyons, and Derek Cowan. Tenuous was the operative word for this first attempt, but we were able to present a performance for public view, albeit there were a lot of audio issues, the images came through rather well.

The second performance of *InterPlay: Intransitive Senses* was for the *Symposium in Science and Literature* at the University of Utah Oct.10, 2003. Artists for this performance were musician Sam Liston, musician Kate Macleod, sonosopher Alex Caldiero, performance artists Beth and Hanelle Miklavcic. Camera operators were Erik Brown, Brian Buck, Kent Christensen, and Erik Hansen. We used this performance to work on the next step on the technical ladder by putting the *Tea Party* performance on a different floor for the purpose of testing the performance of video cable and communications over a long distance.

The following season, on April 23, 24, 25, 2004 *Another Language* presented *InterPlay: Hallucinations*. This performance incorporated our first remote sites involving the University of Alaska: Fairbanks and the Arctic Region Supercomputing Center with artist Miho Aoki, Scott Deal and Node Manager Paul Mercer, and Maryland University with artists Nadja Masura and Brian Buck. We had been meeting with them on the Access Grid within a group called *Art on the Grid* that Jimmy coordinated in the hopes of bringing together like minded individuals interested in experimenting with the use of the Access Grid and other technologies for integration into performances. My work *The Surface of Things* was our local contribution to this *InterPlay*. The scripted scenes used three local actors and sent out three streams using a camera held by two of the actors for the purpose of showing, through the eye of the

camera, the actors' points of view. In addition Erik Brown manned the third camera providing a wide shot of the whole work. Kent Christensen shot documentation, the node operator was Sam Liston, and he was also the audio engineer for this event. Although, we still experienced local audio problems, the audio being sent out to the other sites was clear.

Presentations of *InterPlay: Hallucinations* included a poster session at the *Symposium on Arts Technology* at the University of Utah, September 30-October 2, 2004 and a lecture/demonstration for *Supercomputing Global Showcase, Artistic/Cultural Applications* on November 11, 2004 in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. (*Supercomputing Global* showcases different applications and uses of the Access Grid.)

**InterPlay: Loose Minds in a Box**

Development began in August 2004 for our third *Interplay: Loose Minds in a Box*, the initial idea was developed in *Another Language* meetings during June and July 2004. The call for participants was sent out to the *Art on the Grid* list July 27, 2004.

Seventeen artists and twenty-six technicians came together to create the work.

After dealing with the subject of *Hallucinations*, Jimmy was interested in exploring aspects of multiple personalities or schizophrenia. Based on comments by our board of directors to try to make the performances a little more conceptually friendly to the general public, I came up with an abstraction of the idea into *Loose Minds in a Box*. Allowing for a broad interpretation of this theme. My work within the work was called *Dressers*, my hope was to have several different streams from around the country participate in exploring different personality restraints, freedoms or external perceptions based on the clothes one wears. In addition to myself, the Maryland group lead by Nadja Masura took on this exploration of *Dressers*

Original proposal sent to the *Art on the Grid* list July 27, 2004:

**InterPlay: Loose Minds In a Box**

A Proposal for Participants

April 2005

By Beth Miklavcic

Inspired by Jimmy Miklavcic's idea of working with schizophrenia as a theme for the performance in April of 2005 that Another Language Performing Arts Company and the Center for High Performance Computing will host. I thought I would morph the theme of the concept to "loose minds in a box." The dichotomy of the statement lends itself to some fun interpretations.

Within this idea there are Virtual Reality applications that can be applied, using the box theme, as well as, animation. For example one of Miho Aoki's animations she delivered to us during the performances of *InterPlay: Hallucinations* had figures carrying

boxes. If Scott Deal were to participate how does box translate to his musical structure and can a box visual be incorporated into his musical performance?

I'm also inspired by the concept that the streams we send, in essence, are boxes or rectangles to be exact. Is it possible for the node operators to give a visual presentation of the streams using the box concept? Can the streams themselves be animated or keyed into an interesting visual sequence?

For my part I would like to use three or four remote performers to work on a sequence of events that involve these parameters:

1. The performers are in some kind of a box, be it a cave, a box like structure, or even a cardboard box.
2. The performers begin with a thin layer of clothing and over the thirty or so minutes of the performance they acquire layers of clothing. By the end of the piece they may have on five hats and twenty layers of shirts for example, the more colorful and strange the clothing the better.
3. The structure of the piece will be loosely improvised with certain markers within the performance for particular points of unison.
4. The performers would play with the concept of physical timing and differing movement qualities as they layer on their clothing. A theatre or dance background would lend itself to this type of performance.
5. Spoken text will be incorporated, but for the four performers the emphasis will be visual.

The layering of clothing symbolizes the layers or masks that we acquire to deal with the different aspects of our lives. Such as our work costume, our student costume, our personal relationship costume, etc.

If you have interest in participating in this project contact me either through email [bam@chpc.utah.edu](mailto:bam@chpc.utah.edu) and we can begin a dialogue during the *Art on the Grid* meetings.

### **The Collaborative Process Developmental Stages:**

#### **Initiation of an Idea:**

Within the *Art on the Grid* community the *InterPlays* are a performance format created by *Another*

*Language Performing Arts Company*. Other performances and showings have and do occur within *Art on the Grid* group. Here I will focus on the *InterPlay* collaborative process.

The directors of *Another Language* develop an idea and a call for participants interested in being involved in the proposed project is sent to the *Art on the Grid* electronic list. Those who are interested in pursuing this idea are either invited personally to participate or a participation proposal is submitted to the directors of *Another Language* and, if we feel that the idea presented will fit into the collaboration, then it is accepted.

#### **Brainstorming Visual Threads and Woven Tapestries:**

The next step in this process is to share with the rest of the participants what each site is intending to do locally. Then we spend time toying with possible ways in which to relate and fit together the contributions. For example, how are Miho Aoki's graphic contributions going to relate to a live performer? One idea was to use 2-d representations of costumes superimposed on the dressers, as well as, other performers to enhance the visual idea of clothing affecting personality. To relate to Nadja Masura's dollhouse video images, tabs were used to give the costumes the look of paper doll clothes. We tested this idea and when a red bikini bathing suit was keyed onto percussionist Scott Deal during a very serious moment of his composition, a whole new perception of Scott was the result, bending our reality and playing with our assumptions.

#### **Testing:**

An *InterPlay* meeting schedule was set for Wednesdays at 3:00pm MST and Fridays at 11:00am MST. Not all sites could meet on the same day so Jimmy set up two meetings a week to accommodate the different schedules. Sites set up demonstration showcases to exhibit the possible contributions to *Loose Minds in a Box*. A motion capture demonstration by TJ Rogers from Purdue University with Dioselin Gonzalez in the motion capture suit was held on December 3, 2004. Dioselin demonstrated her AG Juggler project on December 8<sup>th</sup>. On December 10<sup>th</sup> Miho demonstrated her virtual reality design from the Arctic Region Supercomputing Center and we were very impressed with how her design fit into the idea of the *Box*. Testing on December 17<sup>th</sup> focused on blue screen keying with myself moving in front of a blue screen, Miho sent live animated graphics, TJ sent a real time motion capture character and Jimmy mixed the images together. Later in January 2005 music sketches sent via email by Charles Nichols from the University of Montana. A poetry contribution by Nadja was incorporated into the mix of ideas and threads began to form.

#### **Role of the Participant/Artist /Performer:**

I believe that the main focus of the participant involved in the development of an *InterPlay* is to create a high quality work that addresses the concept of the collaboration, but after that, within the *InterPlay*

format, the participant's responsibility is to send useful images for the director to use in the main mix. The participant must provide the director with a sequence of text, images, events or scenes that the director can use as he threads images together. Images provided should help move the theme and performance sequence along.

Awareness of the quality of the streamed images sent by the participant is imperative. Providing useful images is achieved by knowledge of camera technique and effective lighting. The participant may have created the most stunning work in his or her own space, but if we can't see it through the video stream then the work is lost. The visual look of the video stream needs to be addressed even if the main emphasis of the participant is the audio component. Looking at someone's back isn't interesting. Not being able to see the instrument that is played actually causes frustration in the viewer. Dark lighting deters from the dynamics of the sound. The participant needs to think about what they want the network audiences to see and spend time working out how to achieve that goal.

A large part of the responsibility of the participant is to find the visual correlations between the offerings of each of the sites that are participating in the *InterPlay*. We cannot be solely unto ourselves in a collaborative setting and if we can find those connections among offerings then we present a more cohesive whole for the audience. This involves letting go of some of the ideas that one may have for the greater good of the performance. A suggestion I have during the rehearsal process, is that each one of us should watch what each site is intending to do, then we can better find those correlations in the *InterPlay* and we would be able to piece the puzzle together with more visual and auditory connections.

The technological tools used by the participant during the performance are important. Web cameras and headsets are fine for meetings but are not powerful enough during a performance. High quality video cameras and microphones that are run through a mixer for sound reduction, as well as, any number of computers, lighting design, and detailed layout of the performance space are needed. It is difficult for one participant to provide and control all of the requirements needed for a performance. A team of technicians that includes a node operator, lighting technician, and, often overlooked a camera operator will help provide a good quality stream. Communication with networking personnel is essential. Storyboarding the image sequence of the participant's piece with the camera operator who will be shooting during the performance will help provide a good quality stream. This process can provide a series of well thought out images for the director to use in the mixed stream.

The participant, either in the development of a work, or after the piece is completed should take the time to imagine moments that can be seen through the eye of the camera. Some questions the participant should investigate are; where do I want the remote viewing audience to focus on in my piece at any given moment

and can that be shown through the camera? What angles should be used at any given time? Should this be a close up, medium shot or wide shot? Think through the piece, as a filmmaker and the stream that is sent during a performance will be more focused and useful to the director. This is difficult to do with a stationary camera, but if the performer's locomotive path in the camera frame is investigated, many exciting effects can be achieved.

### **Creating a Work within a Work:**

What I find fascinating and inspiring about this performance format is that I have the opportunity to create a work within a work. I believe that each work I have created for the *InterPlay* series could stand-alone as a piece of performance art. I've had the privilege to create three distinctly different works for the *InterPlay* series:

1. *Tea Party* was created for *Intransitive Senses* as a set driven environment. The interaction depicted a generational exchange between two people discovering the value of the magic in their relationship.
2. *The Surface of Things* was an exploration about external assumptions. As well as, an exploration about the use of the camera to depict the performer's point-of-view within the motion of the actors. Giving the audience the opportunity to see what the actor sees as the piece is played out.
3. *Dressers* was about the layering of clothing symbolized the layers or masks that we acquire in order to deal with the different aspects or events of our lives. Such as our work costume, our student costume, our personal relationship costume, and many more.

### **Description of Tea Party:**

Created as a tribute to my daughter Hanelle Miklavcic, I worked with the idea of depicting a cross generational place of play and sharing within the simple constructs of a tea party. When I was very young my sister and I were often encouraged by our mother to go visit an elderly couple down the street. We used to sit with this couple, enjoying cookies and conversation. We could see how much they enjoyed having us visit and it meant a lot to us as young children that someone wanted to spend time with us.

That feeling of acceptance and love inspired *Tea Party*. A very gentle piece that focused on acceptance, by allowing the tea partiers to play through the fantasy of color and design. Magical bags, each representing a gift of play, thought and time were filled with different items and hung from the ceiling. The bags depicted the magic of discovery and once the discovery was exposed, explorations of what could be done with that discovery were undertaken. The sequence of actions by the partygoers was set, but the conversation and some of the events were left open to improvisational moments. By the time the tea party came to a conclusion, the whole environment had changed as a result of the intersection of the two people spending time together playing and enjoying each other's company.



The set design and construction took five months. The painted eyes on the blue scrim in the background were a representation of people watching the tea party through the Access Grid network. For me this was not only a performance piece, but an interactive installation as well.

Brian Buck was our camera operator for the first performance in April 19, 2003. We made the common mistake of setting up a stationary distance shot, which videotaped the whole piece for the thirty minutes, but did not allow for much detail to be seen through the video stream. The second performance of *Tea Party* for *InterPlay: Intransitive Senses* on October 10, 2003 we rehearsed with more awareness of the video images that were sent. Brian became a part of the performance and to achieve the images we needed to send, he had to enter the *Tea Party* environment. This gave him the opportunity to capture a variety of details inherent in the performance through the camera's eye.



**Pictured: Hanelle Miklavcic in *Tea Party***

#### **Description of *The Surface of Things*:**

As a part of the distributed tapestry of artistic pieces that became the assembled puzzle of *InterPlay: Hallucinations*, I wrote a short play titled *The Surface of Things*, it focused on the stereotypes we encounter when first impressions, based on the way we look, are in direct conflict with the sum total of our experiences that define our real selves. The old adage, "don't judge a book by its cover," came into play as a strong motivation for the creation of this work.

As a society, it is my feeling that we suffer from a collective brain washing influenced by the images we are fed from the mass media. Since the *InterPlays* deal with broadcast video communications media in such a pronounced way I felt it was appropriate to address the issue in this forum.

The work consisted of a younger man, played by Aaron Henry, and an older woman, played by myself and in between the two, a judge, played by Tony Larimer. The man and woman made assumptions about each other based on outward appearances and as the exchange continued, the judge, as an outside observer, saw the stupidity of what was happening. The judge became the glue that allowed the two opponents to drop their assumptions and really see each other for the first time.

Aaron Henry was a senior in high school at the time of the performance. He attended Murray High School and wrote for the school literary magazine. Aaron volunteered his time to help the Salvation Army and

the Murray Exchange Club. He had been pursuing his acting career since grade school and he worked on the sets of several movies including *The Crow: Wicked Prayer* (2004) and *Don't Look Under the Bed* (1999).

A distinguished actor, Tony Larimer has an established career. *The Surface of Things* was his debut performance with *Another Language* however; this was not his first appearance on the World Wide Web. He made his first appearance as *Brainiac*, the talking brain for Novell. Tony has had featured roles in numerous films, both feature and made-for-TV. In 2000, Tony received the Roene B. Difore Arts in Education Lifetime Achievement Award and in 2002, the Governor's Artist Award. He retired from teaching English and Theatre at Rowland Hall – St. Mark's School in 1994 where he was privileged to have the performing arts center named in his honor.

Additionally, in the staging of *Surface*, the work was complicated by the fact that the man and woman each held video cameras and used the projected video images as ammunition for their assumptions. The images were projected on hanging frosted plexiglass, on the scrim, as well as, streamed directly over Internet 2. Two full-length mirrors both hung on the wall and a hand held mirror was incorporated into the work allowing the man and woman to check their own *surface* about what was being said.

Three different Flash MX animations were played during certain moments when the exchange paused. The animations served as an abstract apparition of the inner voice. Being negatively judged by outward appearances is a universal experience that most of us have had, creating missed opportunities of many kinds. It is my hope that *The Surface of Things* serves as an artistic statement that gives pause to our very human tendency to make assumptions, before getting to know the real person underneath the surface.

The images from the scenes were mixed by Jimmy Miklavcic as the director of *InterPlay: Hallucinations* with works from Nadja Masura and Brian Buck from the University of Maryland, and Scott Deal and Miho Aoki from the University of Alaska. This performance took place on April 23, 24 and 25, 2004.



**Pictured: Aaron Henry, Tony Larimer and Beth Miklavcic in *The Surface of Things***

#### ***Dressers*:**

*Dressers* created for *InterPlay: Loose Minds in a Box* was my first attempt to involve a coordinated idea between remote streams. My original vision for *Dressers* was to have four or five remote performers from different locations work with the concept of the restrictions or freedoms of our external "costumes"

that we use to get through certain daily roles. The guidelines for costuming, were - begin with more sedate or normal clothing and work towards a more outlandish or fantastic presentation. I wanted the other sites to come up with their own ideas, spring-boarding off the guidelines (see page 3). I didn't want to control the details of what another site would do. I often feel if I control the creativity of others too much in this collaborative setting, I will miss the great contributions that come from their resources, skills and personal experience.

This piece was my attempt to create a cohesive set of performers for the *InterPlay* so that within the *InterPlay* performance the live performers would be presenting a similar set of actions, and based on past audience feedback create more of a sense of cohesiveness among the various streams. I was not able to fully realize this idea, because only one other stream, Nadja Masura and Brian Buck from Maryland decided to pursue the dressing idea. Another set of performers who were initially invited to be dresser participants in the *InterPlay* went in another direction. In the collaboration format some flexibility is needed and I don't think any one participant is ever completely satisfied. If I were choreographing a specific work on a group, and it was clear that the participants were my performers, my approach would be completely different. As it was, I had to approach *Dressers* with flexibility towards what was offered, versus how I originally envisioned the piece.

Although we met weekly for many months, the biggest issue in using the Access Grid, as a creative format is communication. This is ironic since the Access Grid is a communications driven technology. The fact is that each local site exists in its own world. I have not yet found a way to create a coordinated piece within a piece for the *InterPlay* project, but this is one of my future goals. Locally, I can create my work and contribute it as a part of the *InterPlay* performance, but having the patience to deal with the level of communication necessary to create a coordinated piece over long distances has not yet worked out. I discovered, in attempting this *Dressers* project, that communication between sites involves a lot of repetition. Things that are discussed in grid meetings need to be repeated and confirmed in e-mails then repeated again in *InterPlay* rehearsals. To create my own coordinated piece using remote sites for an *InterPlay* performance would require more time and site resources than are currently available.



**Pictured: Brian Buck, Beth Miklavcic (foreground), Moira Jackson, Nick Bartoli, and Nadja Masura in *Dressers***

#### **Dressers Text:**

"I thought I'd change my appearance today - to see which side I'd show.

And every side I showed today,  
redefined the side I'd show."

#### **Premise:**

I developed the external dressing exploration as an abstraction of the schizophrenia theme that Jimmy was interested in exploring for the 2005 *InterPlay*. External changes in appearance are readily observable indications that we have into how people are doing, what their affiliations are; i.e. class, status, wealth, intelligence, etc. The layering of clothing was inspired by the concept of "bag lady," and how, I have observed, some people who were on sanity's edge dress. It is as if dressing was a way to exhibit past desires and experiences of the person who no longer exists.

Even if it is only on a subconscious level, we exist with multiple personalities, but rein them in throughout the day. Within my structured daily routine, I wear different clothes to mark different daily events. For example some of my daily "costumes" include my morning robe, my work out clothes, my business attire, then home-throwing off my work clothes for my casual sweats, later possibly my evening attire. Each one of these outfits I wear during the day allows me to enter a different reality of my existence and partake in activities that are a part of my life.

An example of the mass social schizophrenia we experience in America is Halloween. Other events such as Carnival in New Orleans and Brazil are mass moments designed to let more flamboyant personalities rise to the surface. There are some people who don't reign in their more flamboyant personalities and live their lives fully as to who they believe they are, but they experience a social ostracism that most of us are unwilling bear. When I'm acting in a play or on a movie set I have heard many times from fellow actors, and experienced for myself that the character did not come to life fully until they put on their costumes. The costume gave them the ability to match the outside with the inside and they were able to become what they needed to be. So, what is that?

Our secret lives are just that, mainly secret and exist only in our imagination. I've heard people say, "Only my sister really knows me." I have had conversations with my daughter about how to deal with the various situations that she encounters though out the day. In some stressful situations we've developed a strategy where she puts on a different personality she has Hanelope. Hanelope has more defenses and a thicker skin than Hanelle does, Hanelope rises to the surface when she is needed. This is a way to cope, and we all have our coping mechanisms.

Think about all the different styles of clothing we go through in a lifetime. We shop for a dress, we try it on, it fits like a glove and it feels and looks wonderful!



confrontation this can potentially help me open a small window into my own self-center and begin to build a subset of tools that may eventually help me in “real” life when I’m experiencing a confrontational situation.

On the other hand there can be experiences so horrible that there is a loss of self. What happens when there is so much traumatic damage to a soul that the personality can no longer be recognized? How often have you run into a person you haven’t seen for many years and the first thought is, “Wow, that person has changed.” Or “She’s not the person she was.” “You’ve changed so much.” Is that addition or subtraction of personality or both? I don’t know and is there a way to retrieve a lost personality for someone to “become whole again?”

I believe that explorations of character can begin to be a way to heal. There is a lot of work in art therapy being done in this area. Working through a performance can be a healing process, a connection. There can be times in a performance situation when everything else falls away and there is a total connection with self. It is called being in the moment. People who are experienced performers will know what I’m talking about. Professional athletes and extreme sports enthusiasts are searching for that moment of connection as well. A lot of us search for that moment. The search for experiencing that moment can become an obsession. Is there a way to live moment to moment in appreciation of life without having to go to such extremes?

The function of the citizen artist is a fundamentally constructive way to find the inner or cosmic connection with the “moment.” The fundamental motivation of most artists is creativity or the act of creation. When does the act of creation become more important than anything else? When does the artist let go of external validation, monetary fulfillment, accolades, and focus solely on the act of creation no matter the consequence? I think this is when the artist evolves to a point where he or she has come to terms that the need to create defines that person’s soul. When a person cannot be sustained as a human being without the act of creating. This is pure expression.

I can only speak from my own experience of spending three quarters of my life creating art and it feels like a slow evolution of letting go. To the point that the most important aspect of creating art is the work itself and who I am or my role in the creation is as a channel for the work. Within the letting go, I have found the barriers drop. Creativity is everywhere. Society can’t function without it. Most citizens are artist on some level. We can’t sustain a growing society without creativity in all fields. But the artist who is a citizen must be a researcher just as a scientist must be an artist to problem solve.

**Case Study: InterPlay: Loose Minds in a Box Performance from the Utah Perspective:**

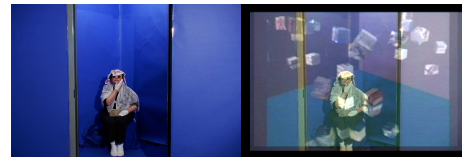
The performance began with a brief introduction by Jimmy Miklavcic for the purpose of explaining to the audience what they would be seeing. He also explained that, at our site, the audience can move from watching the screen to viewing the various

performances to experimenting with the Virtual Environment that was available on two systems in the lobby. After the introduction Jimmy read this poem *Still as I Stay*.

After Jimmy’s poem it was my responsibility to turn off the house lights, turn on the Arri photo light to illuminate my closet performance space, and to turn the Panasonic DVX100A video camera around to focus on the closet. This was done in the time that it took Jimmy to walk from the auditorium to the control room and begin the piece. The music from Scott Deal began before I was able to enter the closet, but I knew that my stream wasn’t in the main mix at this time. This gave me the freedom to take a breath and enter my space as if entering a different reality, like walking into a dream.

The character investigations for *Dressers* were:

**Scene 1 – The Void in the Corner Church Lady:**



**Unprocessed Image      Mixed Image**

**Scene 2 – The Imprisonment of Thought Dragon Lady:**



**Unprocessed Image      Mixed Image**

**Scene 3 – The Air Inside our Head Madeline:**



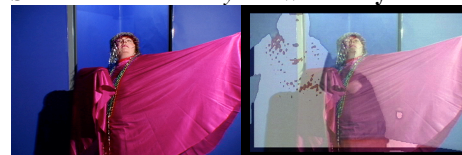
**Unprocessed Image      Mixed Image**

**Scene 4 – One is None Masked Witch:**



**Unprocessed Image      Mixed Image**

**Scene 5A – How Many Are We? Party Dress:**



**Unprocessed Image      Mixed Image**

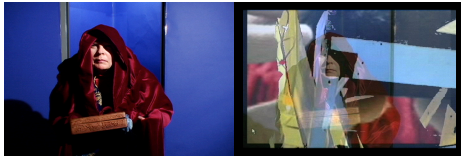


**Scene 5B – Let Loose the Mind Party Hat:**



**Unprocessed Image      Mixed Image**

**Scene 6 – Shades of Blue:**



**Unprocessed Image      Mixed Image**

**Commonalities:**

What is interesting to me is the commonality of experiences that we tie into the streamed images. When I initially picked out Hanelle Miklavcic’s paper maché hat to use in scene five B for *Dressers*, my original thinking was, “If I can get this to balance on my head it might be dynamic in *Dressers*, because it is so tall it will send a fun image.” Then those who were rehearsing the day I worked with it for the first time made a Dr. Seuss, *Go Dog Go* connection almost simultaneously. Philosophically, do we need commonality to make sense of these images? Or can we accept streamed and mixed images without the need to control our references to them?

To me, it is a similar experience to imposing images of animals to clouds, seeing a face in a mountain or religious figures in French toast. All these things are ways for our brain to create threads of commonality about our experiences. If someone has never seen a turtle, then the cloud won’t look like a turtle to that person.

What I’m starting to find through my research in this *InterPlay* performance format is that there is a common need for the viewer to find ways to make sense of these images. The majority of our audience can’t accept the images simply for what they are, they have to “mean” something. The studio audience and remote viewers have to find a way to reference some experience for themselves. The most difficult thing about working with a new technology such as this, is continuing to explore new possibilities and not fall into the trap of creating work that has already been done before, but to continue to explore a new way of creating art and new ways of presenting art. This doesn’t mean that every single performance is going to be successful, in terms of audience recognition, but exploration by nature involves risk.

If we stop mining for new ideas in the *InterPlay* developmental process, then we start baking cakes, and the exploration is over. I want to continue the exploration, building on each performance experience in the hopes that some of our audience will take the journey with us. I worked with symbolic correlations in *Dressers* and I took the time to develop a story no matter how abstract it appeared. I’m asking our audience to see what is happening at the moment, step

outside of the box and see the new potential of this artistic medium. This is the fundamental philosophy and structure that we struggle with when developing original work in a new creative setting.

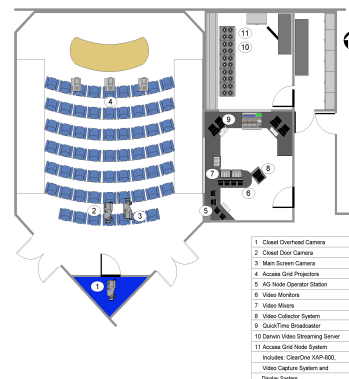
While introducing *Hallucinations* performance in 2004, Jimmy said, “Create your own story within the images that you see.” Other *Art on the Grid* performances will be formatted with different structures, but the *InterPlays* are based on abstraction and surrealism. *InterPlay* is a collage of images, music and performance events that come together to interact in the collaborative art space.

**Purpose of the Mixed Stream:**

The stream that we call the main mix is in essence director Jimmy Miklavcic’s painting. It is a portal of combined images, designed to find and show the connecting threads between the offerings of the various sites in the *InterPlay* tapestry. Jimmy comes from a very strong visual arts background. He views everything he does as a painter. With that in mind Jimmy approaches his role in the performance as a live digital painter.

During the performance he takes the incoming images, mixes them together, and then as the piece progresses he begins to process them with different visual effects. The order and use of the effects is very important for building a visual dynamic. The effect order he designed for *Loose Minds in a Box* was cross fades, wipes, processing with paint and negative filters, luminance keying, chroma keying and cross fades, then all effects combined for the last scene.

In Utah, our audience had the opportunity to view the unmixed streams as well, especially in scenes five and six where almost all of the incoming streams were activated and placed up on the scrim. The beauty and chaotic nature of the display is an issue. Each site had a different physical layout, and with that in mind, each node operator displayed the scenes differently. The audience at each site experienced the effects, visual correlations and development of the scenes differently.



**University of Utah Intermountain Network and Scientific Computation Center  
Auditorium Floor Plan for *InterPlay: Loose Minds in a Box***

How the performance is displayed may be one of the next issues for us to address, if the displays were more coordinated then the desired effect for the piece may be more universal between the sites. Even though it

won't be possible to be exactly the same, we may come closer to allowing our studio audiences to have a shared experience. The node wrangler is important and more attention should be placed on this technical role.

#### **Audience Feedback and Discussion:**

After each performance we have an open forum for audience discussion, responses and questions. We often have several local questions additionally there are usually many questions and responses from each site. The hard part is providing equal time for each site. On the third performance we finally settled on taking a few questions in Utah first and then going through each site formally. In this way the audiences from each site had a chance to share thoughts. After going through each site we said our goodbyes and signed off from the Access Grid, but local discussions continued at some sites for quite a while.

Most audience questions are about the technology. The subject most often asked is how to deal with the one to two second delays we currently experience. Especially for the musicians, people are curious about what is it like to play together with another musician and deal with that issue. Scott and Charles left enough open space in their compositions to allow for the delay. It can't be denied. This is another example of working with a new technology and as a participating artist one must adjust to work within this performance format.

During the post performance discussions, the performers offered their inspirations and processes into their interpretation of the *InterPlay* theme. This year was the *Box* each of us experienced and was inspired by different "sides" of the box, so to speak. It was interesting for me to hear how each participant interpreted the box theme, and how through the performance experience, the interpretations matured from our initial meetings.

The most consistent comment from audience members is about trying to fit their own life experience into the *InterPlay* performance. Often people want all the windows to look alike. Most of us have grown up with entertainment formats that are based on western structures such as plays with linear storylines, or television shows where there is a neat enclosed story with a beginning, middle and end in a predefined structure. Most audience members want us to squish the *InterPlays* and this new communications technology into a predefined structure that already exists and to which they are comfortable.

Is that really what we want to do with the *InterPlays*? My first response is no, at least not in the *InterPlay* structure. Can our audience release into a dream like state, while awake, without trying to change the sequence of images that are presented? Is it "bad" to have a series of images that are seemingly unrelated? (Even though they aren't.) Generally people want to have some sense of where a story is headed, this creates anticipation about what is going to happen next. There is a sense of that when viewing linear stories; a thing is going to happen, and then another thing and then the anticipation of the next thing. When given a sequence of mixed abstract surreal images

anticipating the next series of events is unlikely, because the audience member has no clue as to what is going to happen next.

Releasing control is one of the hardest things a person can do, we are asking a lot of our audiences. In *Loose Minds in a Box* there was a lot of relativity and connection between the sequences in the scenes. I do know that I don't want to repeat the same kind of structured performances that audiences already know. With a new technology, comes a new performance format.



**Audience Discussion April 17, 2005 from Utah Perspective**  
Utah from left to right: Beth Miklavcic, Jimmy Miklavcic, Billy Gowen, and Erik Brown  
Scrim from left to right: Miho Aoki - Alaska, Charles Nichols and Montana audience, EVL, and Purdue

#### **Technology Layer:**

Not only is it the responsibility of the artist/participant to create a work within a work, it is also the responsibility of the artist to deal with the technology layering that is inherent to this performance format. The participant must consider the idea that they do have a live audience viewing the work, but the main focus should be on the stream that is sent out. The participant's responsibility is to send a stream with usable images to help enhance the main mix and carry the theme of the performance along.

If the lighting is too dark and the events in a participant's stream cannot be seen, then those images are not usable to the director. If the microphone is thumping or scraping or sending out distracting noise than the audio isn't usable and should be muted by the node operator in order not to distract from the piece as whole. Knowledge of camera technique and using a camera operator for the performance is imperative. A skilled camera operator who knows how to work with manual focus, iris and gain exposures will greatly enhance the work. If all that is being sent is a wide shot with no additional close-ups or points-of-interest then that can only be introduced into the main mix so many times before it becomes repetitious.

The participant can achieve interesting streamed images by completing the local piece early and then examining the image compositions with a mobile camera. Testing with another site to get feedback about the sent images and camera work is important. Using a stationary camera to react with, much in the same way as having a conversation with a person is another alternative. All angles must be explored; close-ups, medium shots and wide shots need to be part of the library of images being sent. Think about how the human eye focuses on different things while having a conversation with a person. At times the

focus goes to the whole face, then just an eye, possibly a minute detail. Other times the whole body or even looking away. Another way to create a strong video stream is to storyboard the camera images that will be sent during the performance.

The participant needs to be aware that some video streams sent through the Access Grid are dark. Good lighting integrated into the local work is imperative in achieving a strong video stream that the director can use. If these technical elements aren't incorporated into the work then what is sent out through the Access Grid literally looks like visual mush and cannot be used in the mix. If the participant is not able to use these technical enhancements then video streaming performance may not be the right venue for the participant.

The local audience attending the performance should be made aware that they are a studio audience. There will be cameras and lighting in untraditional places. Especially for people who are used to proscenium performances, the *InterPlays* are a very different experience. Jimmy prefers to refer to our local performances as a walking live art gallery and our studio audience is invited to get up and move to the different rooms where the performances are taking place. This gives our studio audience the unique opportunity to see different perspectives of the performance, giving our studio audience more insight into the process of creating the video images that are presented on the scrim.

Our rehearsal process needs more fine-tuning. The local site's work needs to be together three weeks before the performance. Jimmy needs time to work each individual scene so that problems that may not be apparent to the local site, but are coming through the Access Grid to the other sites can be addressed and corrected. Jimmy needs more time to look at the streamed events, decide what images work best together, when to mix them, and what processing to use. Even if an artist is using an improvisational structure, Jimmy needs a set of outlined sequences or points of reference, so that he can plan how to involve the improvisation into the main mix. If the participant takes these preparatory steps, it is likely the site will be streaming images that can be used and will most likely be incorporated into the main mix, more often.

It is imperative to understand the layering that is involved in putting together the final collaboration for public view. At this time they are; Local Art, Local Technical Improvements, Audio and Video Stream Testing, Scene testing, Storyboarding and Director's Mixed Structure. I'm sure more will be added to this list in time.

#### **Access Grid Etiquette:**

The purpose of discussing etiquette is to help make the communication, rehearsal and performance process smoother. The point of bringing up some of these issues is to bring awareness to them. The difficulty with using the Access Grid Technology is self-monitoring. For example, in the meeting process, people would tell me the audio I was sending was loud, and until I actually heard myself in some of the

screen capture documentation I had no idea how loud of a signal I was really sending. I learned to read the Robust Audio Tool (RAT) levels on the node desktop, but to me that is still an abstract visual and I can't equate a physical reference to the green display line. I just know if my voice registers in the yellow or red I need to turn it down. Without a way to actually listen to what I'm sending I just have to take my best guess and go by the feedback of others in the meeting. The problem with this that at each site locally the levels can be set differently, as a result I get different feedback from each site

#### **Audio:**

Audio quality is one of the largest issues we have. Some people have a tendency to speak softly and it is very hard to hear them, or they are speaking normally but their signal is set to a lower level and needs to be turned up. The challenge of working with the Access Grid technology is there are so many pieces of the puzzle that could be causing the problem. The checklist includes the echo canceling system, the Robust Audio Tool (RAT) or the sound card's mixing controls. Figuring out which piece of the puzzle is the culprit can be problematic and learning to work with it all takes time.

Microphone thumping and excessive noise is also difficult to deal with as a listener. It distracts from what is being said. Sharing of head microphones is not desired because everyone in the meeting has to wait for the microphone to be muted, and then the exchange of the microphone to take place, then unmuting the microphone. In addition, the next person speaking may be louder or softer than the previous speaker who was using the headset and everyone has to chime in, "You are too loud or too soft, turn up or down your RAT."

Microphones need to be turned off when a conversation between participants at a local site occurs. The background conversation can make it difficult to hear someone who is addressing the whole Art on the Grid group. It is just like talking during a test or in class when the teacher is trying to lecture. Very distracting!

#### **Meeting Times:**

All participants occasionally have unforeseen technical problems, but in order to maintain consistent meeting times it is important to take a few simple steps towards punctual attendance. Jimmy and I suggest that participants activate their grid node at least one half hour before the scheduled meeting. During this half hour the audio levels, the video transmission and network integrity can be properly tested with the assistance of other attending sites. It is distracting when this feedback is needed in the middle of a meeting.

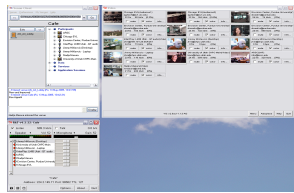
I've experienced being able to see and talk with Jimmy in our building and having no awareness that others on the grid were not seeing or hearing us. Then unfortunately a few minutes into the meeting realizing that we are having some kind of technical issue. One of the most frustrating experiences is being able to hear and see everyone else and see my own video

stream, but no one else in the meeting can hear or see me. These moments become an experience of disembodied presence and invisibility. I'm attending the meeting but no one else is aware of my presence.

Once a participant knows that their site is operating well that day, they can continue going about their business with the talk off. Bring something to do if the meeting is held in a class or conference room. The node operator in charge of a facility that uses the Access Grid Node on a regular basis already takes these preparatory steps knowing that the technology is tenuous.

A useful communications tool we have available to us is the PSI Jabber text chat software. Incorporating this tool into our meeting process allows us to communicate on a separate channel outside of the Access Grid. This is especially useful if a site is having difficulty with their grid system and allows us to continue the meeting in some form. In addition, all participants should exchange phone numbers in case of last minute technical problems.

The development of an *InterPlay* project is dependent on consistent participation in the meetings. The participants engage in social bonding, brainstorming and sharing of ideas. If a participant isn't a part of this developmental progression from the beginning, the collaborative process may not reach its full potential.



**Desktop Image of a Meeting in Process**

#### **Rehearsals:**

Scheduled rehearsal time indicates that local set up is completed and the site is ready to work on the predetermined material for that rehearsal. There is always some waiting and patience involved in participating in anything using the Access Grid, but if the majority of us are waiting for one or two sites to get ready that cuts significantly into the rehearsal time. The result is an incomplete rehearsal that affects the quality of what we are presenting. Debugging needs to be done before or after rehearsals, which brings us to the point that if a scheduled group rehearsal is 2-4pm, for each local site that probably means at least 1-5pm. Differences in time zones can be an issue, as well, and can result in some confusion. The rehearsal schedule should include the appropriate times for each time zone and rehearsal times should be alternated so that one site isn't always rehearsing at midnight.

For whatever reason, in past projects, a site would not show up to a rehearsal at all. When a significant portion of what needed to be developed that day involved that particular site. The result was that Jimmy was unable to make the best choices for the main mix in relationship to the images sent from that site.

During the developmental stage, Jimmy needs time to sit and watch the performance offering of each individual site, so that he can have a really strong understanding of the performance sequence. It is appropriate for the director to tweak the sequences to better serve the *InterPlay* performance as a whole.

By three weeks before the performance, we need to rehearse with all equipment that is going to be used and not condensed set-ups. One example is when we did not rehearse with a complete audio set up this resulted in an audio collage that worked in rehearsal, but was completely drowned out in performance. Other experiences included being unable to see the performer because an audience member or technician was standing in front of the camera.

A lot of these issues can be addressed if we have local sites set-up completely three weeks ahead of time, using the first week to test individual sites, the second week would include piecing the sites together within a scene and the third week would be full dress rehearsals leading up to the performance. Each site is only a piece of the puzzle and even though this process may seem very repetitious by the time we get to performance week a much tighter performance and cleaner collage will be the result. This gives Jimmy the time to develop a stronger more cohesive main mix. What this does is expand the idea of tech week into a three-week process.

On a side note – during the first week of rehearsals when we intended to break down each scene for *InterPlay: Loose Minds in a Box*, in Utah, our campus router went down. We were completely unable to rehearse and there was nothing we could do to fix it. We were completely at the mercy of the campus networking staff's ability to fix the problem. This could easily have happened the week of the concert, which is why using this technology for performances, is so risky and nerve wracking.

#### **Camera:**

During performances, the camera is our portal into the participant's world. What is happening with the camera equals the video stream the audience is seeing. Roving, unfocused cameras can be very distracting. The camera angle should be considered. Lighting is very important. The video streams tend to be dark anyway and if the person is not lit well it is very hard to see the performance material.

In meetings the, participants need to position themselves so that they are speaking toward the camera, we get locked into talking to the other participant's streams and forget that the camera is possibly seeing the back of our head or that we are constantly showing our profile, which looks as if we are talking to a wall. A simple trick for someone who is working the node or their personal desktop is to place the incoming streams with in line with the sending camera. This gives the participant the visual feedback from the other streams and yet projects the participant's image into the camera. If possible, the best location for camera placement in the meetings is centered on top of the participant's monitor.



A camera should always be focused on the person speaking. Otherwise it is very confusing to the rest of the meeting participants. It is difficult to listen and respond to a voice floating in cyberspace. This is where the projection of oneself is important. The thought process tends to be "I know that I'm present and participating in the meeting." In this scenario, the image being sent does not reflect that participation. Other participants respond to what is being sent, not who the person is. It is doubtful that a participant will be able to compose a high quality stream for a performance when that participant isn't aware of their audio and video components in a standard meeting.

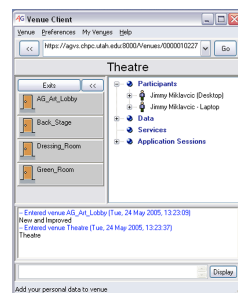
### **Roles of the Citizen and Comparative Reflections to the Role of the *InterPlay* Participant:**

The collaborative process of an *InterPlay* performance reflects citizenship roles. How one approaches the process of participating in an *InterPlay* is the same as one approaches interactions within society as a whole. I will make comparisons to American Society and its citizenry since that is the social structure with which I am familiar. My approach will be to reflect about citizenry using *InterPlays* as a microcosm or subset of the larger issues.

### **Involvement:**

Involvement means being willing to take a risk and being an active participant and as in any society participation equals action. The *Art on the Grid* mailing list has about seventy-five people signed up, but only a small handful actively participate in the *Art on the Grid* community and the number reduces even further for the *InterPlay* projects.

We would love to see more projects occurring on a regular basis. With our venue server [agvs.chpc.utah.edu](http://agvs.chpc.utah.edu) we have many rooms that can be used for rehearsals and performances. Jimmy designed the structure to be set up like a theater. From the virtual lobby one has access to a Black Box, Café, Studio\_1, Studio\_2, and the Theatre. Through the Theatre there is access to the Back Stage, Dressing, Green Rooms or back to the AG Art Lobby. At any given time we would love to see many of the rooms in use for simultaneous rehearsals and performances.



**Pictured: Utah Art on the Grid AG Theatre Venue**

### **Communication:**

One of the most interesting dichotomies of working with this communications technology is that communicating clearly and understanding the interpersonal dynamic is extremely difficult. Reading body language is very difficult because when we meet

we only see a floating head on the screen, we can't use our other senses to assess the situation.

Miscommunications occur almost constantly in our society and most of the time I am amazed that our society functions at all. In the *InterPlay* process we can use distance to our advantage. We take advantage of time, space and other communication tools such as e-mail to clarify a miscommunication. One of the issues with the other communication tools at our disposal, and this also goes back to AG Etiquette is that e-mails should be responded to or at least acknowledged that they have been received so that the sender knows the email hasn't fallen into the black hole of cyberspace.

In our society today our communications resources are becoming more controlled and filtered each day. So, what are our resources? The Internet although at times a questionable resource, is one of our last free speech strongholds. It enables us to instantly send out messages to many people, to get the word out about what is happening and to mobilize groups.

As funding is cut in the arts and sciences it is important to have another stronghold for freedom of artistic expression and scientific exploration. The research occurring in the *Art on the Grid* community is one of those vestiges, a fort of artistic freedom, so to speak.

### **Problem Solving:**

I believe that doing anything creates a series of problems that need to be solved. Life is just that and if we don't approach it as such, then we exist in a constantly stressed state. Wondering why we aren't living one of those fantasy lives we are fed to believe exists in movies and television. Not many things actually wrap up neatly in two hours and conclude with everything all resolved. Once the curtain goes down or the video fades out then we are confronted with a whole new set of problems or tasks left to deal with.

The *InterPlay* projects involve constant problem solving. There are different issues occurring from each site, as well as our own, Jimmy and I discuss for hours the process of how to deal with different things that may be occurring. Jimmy has the ability to diffuse situations with humor, which is especially valuable when we begin to take ourselves too seriously and as "artists" there is the tendency to do this.

What we are doing on the *Art on the Grid* and with the *InterPlay* series is very difficult. We are trying to create art without any safety nets. There is no one to go to when something isn't working correctly. The pipeline for where the possible breakage exists is huge. In Utah, there have been times when personnel have made changes to the network. No one using the *Access Grid* was told and the configuration that worked previously all of a sudden is broken. We need to know and be given proper warnings, so that we can deal with upgrades and changes. This will enable us to stay on schedule.

On the other hand we have a fantastic team of networking people at the *Center for High Performance Computing* and Joe Breen has been instrumental in dealing with each problem that does occur. Joe has sacrificed sleep and time from family to get things working in a stable manner. His efforts have given us some reliance that most of the time when we need the *Access Grid* to work, it does.

Embracing the challenge of solving the problems that occur is what participation in the *Art on the Grid* community is about. Setting up a common goal for an *InterPlay* project and muddling through is part of the excitement of being involved. As a participant in the *InterPlays* I know that problem solving is research and taking up the challenge of the unknown feeds my artistic spirit and encourages me to continue working in the medium.

**Contribution:**

How do we strive for something more than what currently exists? How do we take up arms, so to speak, and fight for freedom of artistic expression? How is that a contribution to society?

“Anything worth doing stands on the edge of danger and disaster,” this is a quote I heard years ago, I can’t remember who said it, but it stuck with me. At any given moment the months of work putting together an *InterPlay* project can totally be wiped out. We could have a power outage or the network could go down. Any number of local issues could pop up. Such as this year (2005), on opening night, the *Arctic Region Supercomputing Center* in Fairbanks, Alaska had a network cable severed in Seward, Alaska two hours before the performance. We had spent months advertising the performance, we charge an admission fee, and quite frankly as the Artistic Director of my company, this is terrifying. What we present to the public represents the work of *Another Language Performing Arts Company* and most of our audience members do not understand the issues involved.

There is a lot riding on each performance and by some miracle we have been able to present each one that has been scheduled. We had one major local glitch in Utah, on opening night for *Hallucinations* in 2004 our local audio turned into static. We gave the audience the option to stay or leave with a ticket refund. They all stayed and suffered through the audio. It amazed me, because I would have left.

I believe that being willing to be vulnerable and push through some of these issues despite all odds is a parallel to how we need to participate as citizens, dealing with larger issues. If all of us stopped taking risks and hid away because of fear, none of us would leave our homes or apartments. By continuing to pursue our goals, by standing up and facing the potential of disaster each day our society continues to function. That bravery is the contribution that has defined the American spirit from the beginning. As artists we stand up and face criticisms, doubts, small audiences and people not understanding what it is that we are doing on a daily basis. We choose to face that and continue to pursue the work anyway.

**Defining Roles:**

The *Art on the Grid* community is democratic. Anyone who can is able to join. Within that larger group is a subset of smaller groups depending on what project is in the works any given time. The *InterPlays* are a collaborative format revolving around a mutual theme and under the direction of Jimmy Miklavcic. The *InterPlays* are not democratic, the majority does not rule. The final decision belongs to the director.

Leadership within the *InterPlays* involves the ability to listen to all ideas, sift through them and create a project that incorporates the connections. The planning committees are in essence our meetings, and then those committees break off into smaller subsets to work on tasks such as when Many Ayromlou-Ryerson University Toronto, Canada, TJ Rogers and Charles Nichols worked on the motion capture–midi connection. In addition to that structure, the project breaks down into smaller individual subsets for each individual site.



**Responsibility:**

There is tremendous responsibility placed on each participant and each participating site. Once the commitment is made to be a part of the upcoming *InterPlay*, the directors of *Another Language* depend totally on people following through with what they say they are going to do.

We expect people to follow through with their original proposal. If the work’s development begins to move in a different direction then the reason a site was invited to participate in the project becomes moot. Decisions regarding the whole work are based on these first proposals. If the idea changes too much then it becomes more difficult to incorporate the site into the whole structure of the *InterPlay* performance.

The ideal site stays in constant communication with Jimmy and works with the locally technical specialist to investigate ideas. Visual aides showing the local site performance set up and the layout for audience

seating help Jimmy and myself to have a broader understanding of how the *InterPlay* will be seen at various sites. Explaining the local technical situation and the technical limitations, as well as, taking us through their processes are welcome forms of communication so that we can have a better understanding of the performance presentation at each site.

As in any endeavor there are usually people more invested in a project than others, and the group is only as strong as its weakest link. I don't think it is too much to ask of people to live up to the initial commitment that is made when the participant is filled with excitement for the project. The real test of character involves those moments when the process is not fun but incredibly challenging.

#### **Flexibility: Plans A, B and C**

Just as in life, initial plans and goals may not work out. What does one do when a career goal or family goal is not achieved? Is life a downhill slide from there? Being flexible and realizing this is a temporary situation, valuing the moment-to-moment experiences we have, can create a life worth living. Flexibility is the key to survival.

Working on projects that depend on a vulnerable platform where anything can go wrong at any moment involves a lot of risk. When taking these types of chances, back up plans and equipment are necessary. We try to have back up copies of audio and video files from each artist just in case their network goes down during the performance.

Fortunately we haven't had to use these emergency backups to date. In Utah, we have back up equipment available if we need to replace machines at the last minute. We have an understanding of what the ideal mix would be and what to do if various sites crash, in the middle of the performance. Jimmy has had his video collector machine crash in the middle of a performance and the audience never knew it.

#### **Respect for Fellow Participants:**

Respect is defined in the Webster's dictionary as, "To feel or show deferential regard for: esteem. Willingness to show consideration or appreciation."

Respect seems simple, yet it is very tricky. The interpersonal relationships experienced by the various artists involved in our projects greatly affects whether they will be offered the opportunity to participate again. As in any group there exists a plethora of interpersonal dynamics in the communication and development process of achieving a finished production.

#### **Working Together for a Common Goal:**

We have to participate, to create activity. If our citizenry doesn't vote, if we aren't active participants in the process, if we don't work together for a common goal then things may occur that we may not want. Our society functions on groups of people working together to achieve a common goal. In business, in politics, in education, in our personal lives most of us live and work as a team. If this structure

breaks down then goals are not achieved, if we aren't flexible and open to new ideas then we stagnate in a still pond of unrealized experiences.

The really great and interesting thing about participating in the *InterPlays* is watching and participating in the process of people coming together to achieve a common goal. There is a real sense of purpose in these projects for so many reasons. Some benefits experienced by participants include but are not limited to recognition, motivation, funding, infrastructure improvements, and thesis projects. By coming together as a consortium the separate pieces make up a stronger whole.

Having the opportunity to meet and work with artists outside of my local sphere has been invigorating and inspiring. Each project is a platform for the development of new ideas. That is what feeds me and keeps me going in this genre. I've been working in this complicated, intense, fun and challenging area of artistic exploration for four years and my interest in pursuing this area of artistic research continues to grow.

#### **Achievement:**

It is magical when all the blood sweat, tears, sleepless nights and other sacrifices finally come together and we bring an *InterPlay* performance to the public. There is no concept of the end for me though. Each project I work on is a building block or stepping stone for the next. Although, a finished performance can feel as though we have achieved something.

Creating *InterPlays* has changed the make up of my artistic identity, broadened my horizons and added to the many sides of my own personality. Being an artist, participant and Artistic Director in the *InterPlay* series has helped me think outside the box. In our society some people move backward, some people are arrested in their development, some are only able to deal with the present, others look forward embracing change and some are out there on the edge. The flow of information continues to grow, achievement is temporary, what is cutting edge today will be history tomorrow. Achievement is a moment in time, fleeting and valuable. Just as we are benefiting from the previous work of many, our achievements will open some doors for the next generation of artists to develop their work.

#### **Directors Roles:**

Jimmy and I have a symbiotic relationship. We have been married for twenty-five years and have been working together as artists even longer. We formed *Another Language Performing Arts Company* in 1985 and have been working together to keep this company afloat ever since.

My involvement is integral to bringing our works to the public. My strengths are organizational, including planning out time-lines and keeping to our schedules. We often set up mini-goals involving technical improvements for each performance this brings additional complications into the process of developing a project.

As Artistic Director of *Another Language*, many of the artistic contributions to the *InterPlays* I approve. I often choose and contact our local artists. I organize all publicity and maintain all administrative aspects of the company. Jimmy and I collaborate on graphics and press releases. *Another Language* is truly a collaborative effort between Jimmy and myself.

Jimmy is the Director of the *InterPlay* series and he is responsible for putting together all of the meetings, rehearsal times and participating contributions. He communicates with the participating artists about their work. Jimmy is the one who pushes the technology forward and has a deeper understanding of the technology involved in bringing our projects to fruition.

**Biography:**

Beth Miklavcic is the Founding Artistic Director of *Another Language Performing Arts Company* since its inception in 1985. She has been dancing since the age of four and has studied a variety of dance techniques. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Masters of Fine Arts in Modern Dance from the *University of Utah* where she earned Orchesis awards in choreography and performance and graduated Phi Kappa Phi. In 1995 Beth and Jimmy were jointly awarded the Salt Lake City Mayors Artist award for artistic performance and contributions to the community. Her choreography has been critically acclaimed and has been shown internationally. She has created a variety of dance for the camera videos and her work *Creative Passings* has been shown in a variety of festivals. In 2005 she directed her first linear story line movie, a mockumentary, titled *Music for Bubble Biters: The Documentary*, which was inspired by a music composition created by Jimmy Miklavcic in 1985. Included in her broad performance background Beth has been a professional actress since 1997. She has participated in a variety of plays, commercials, television shows, independent films and feature films. She can be seen as Renae in the feature film *Napoleon Dynamite* (DVD) and as Melissa Joan Hart's math teacher in the feature film *Drive Me Crazy*. Beth is a Media Specialist at the *Center for High Performance Computing*; she has experience in digital graphics, image processing, digital video editing, DVD authoring, 2-D and 3-D animation, motion capture and Access Grid research.