EXPANDING TECHNOLOGIZED THEATRE TO PERFORM INTERMEDIAL DRAMATURGY

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ABSTRACT

This article attends to how the utilization of technological devices in twenty-first-century theatre performances can influence audiences' perception of the relationship between humans and technology. Representing artists' work in the fields of new media dramaturgy, intermedial performance strengthens the role of the human body in performance by organizing the embodiment as a technologized theatre strategy. This means that through theatrical technologization, the theatre expands into intermedial performance. This research applies Marco de Marinis' semiotic theory and Chiel Kattenbelt's intermedial theory as the formal objects. A contemporary performance, Jack the Robot performance, becomes the material object. The research uses a hermeneutic qualitative method. The data analysis technique is to reduce and classify data to discover concepts and theories between data in practice. The findings show that dramaturgy is no longer treated only as science, technology, and art, but its benefits are extended to society. Human resources' creativeness and expanded capacity return the body of art organically into interdisciplinary, intercultural, and educational embodiment. Dramaturgy, expanded with theatrical technologization, in its exploration extends to the intersection between embodiment, *mise-en-scène*, intermedial space, and its impact on the audiences' perception.

Keywords: technologized theatre strategy; *mise-en-scène*; semiotic theory, intermedial theory; new media dramaturgy

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 20th century, dramaturgy as a drama science experienced an expansion in its definition, meaning, and practice. The dramaturgical practice extends dramaturgy from the artistic domain to infrastructure. Dramaturgical practice is also tied to the institutional structures and funding bodies that shape the performance economy. New Dramaturgy as a general term for dramaturgical practice is a marker of changes in its historical meaning. The term "new" does not differentiate it from the old but places dramaturgical practice in a linear timeline that shows the continuity of its initial principles. The impact of dramaturgical practice makes it easier for someone to develop dramaturgical terms in context (Bleeker, 2023; Tapper, 2018). Yudiaryani's (2023) discovery of the linear timeline of the concepts of mimetic dramaturgy, elicitation dramaturgy, and interactive dramaturgy indicates a shift in Paradigm, Mindset, Value (PMV) in the desire of artists to reconstruct dramaturgical practices in context.

The 21st century is marked by many media performances, which change the relationship between ontology, mediality (functionality), and modes of perception

(specific conventions) of various media within it. Performance art exists through a global and urban cosmopolitan context, which is inherently a multi-, cross--, art and non-art disciplinary performance (Dixon, 2007). These conditions challenge arts institutions to develop inspiration and imagination in the practice of creating art and conducting scientific research, so that various fundamental questions arise regarding efforts to preserve, develop, and utilize science, technology, and art to improve the quality of human life (Rustiyanti et al., 2020).

Digital technology-based theatrical performances, or technologized theatre, are a relationship between computer technology, live performances, and visual installations, as well as digital games where performance is a central aspect of the content (Fernandez, 2016). This can be witnessed through, for example, human figures moving, speaking, or "performing", or forms of interactive installations that encourage visitors to take action.

The theatre produces certain forms for what purpose? And in turn, who or what caused theatre to create the form? How do performing arts actors respond to the contestation of science, technology, and art, both in knowledge and practice

Today's digital production performance is characterized by a physical aspect, where the interface between the human body and the machine has a haptic/touch interaction between the two. How does perceptual performance analysis perform in its physical dimensions? How to display intermedial performance technology, in terms of aspects of the mutual influence between media according to Kattenbelt (2009)?

METHOD

To uncover answers to existing questions, this research uses several approaches. The first approach uses a new media dramaturgy approach, which expands dramaturgy into work dramaturgy (Eckersall et al., 2017; Yudiaryani, 2023). The second approach uses Régis Debray's mediology approach, namely material practices whose form and content are useful for understanding the object of study and the perceptions of community members (Bay-Cheng et al., 2010; Bleeker, 2023). The third approach uses performance semiotics known as performance textual analysis (de Marinis, 1993). The third approach uses performance semiotics known as performance textual analysis. The text studied is the contextual management of the *mise en scène* of the performance (Fischer-Lichte, 2008).

In more depth, this article takes the example of the drama performance *JTDS 4.0 Metamorf* with the main character a robot named Jack (Bulqini & Mainteater Bandung, 2023). This performance was presented on August 4-5, 2023 in the middle of the *ARTJOG 2023* exhibition.

DISCUSSION

State-of-the-Art and Novelty of Performance Technology

Electronic devices with automatic systems created to store and process data are referred to as digital technology. The application of digital technology in various aspects of life is often referred to as technologization (Lu et al., 2020). This technologization culture has penetrated almost all levels of society. Starting from the education sector, and government from central to regional. Work technologization provides better work

efficiency. Starting from social networking, online shopping, and various applications to suit people's lifestyles, to remote work.

Technologization is the term "technology" which is given the suffix "-ization" which means a technological process so that the condition of being "technologized" is achieved. In the world of art, technology is a way for artists to develop their creative works. Computers, for example, have evolved into high-tech creative tools, producing everything from still photos and animations to streaming digital content and digital installations (Harvey, 2014; Jindi, 2019).

New Media Dramaturgy: Mimetic, Epicization, and Interactive Timelines

Mimetic dramaturgy is an intermediary imitation. Imitation works by prehistoric humans used performance elements such as myths, ceremonies, magic, wisdom, and masks. The love of imitating and observing other people imitating caused cultured humans to write and perform plays, and gather with people to watch them. The actor departs from the "everyday world" to the "performance world", from one reference place, time, and space to a different place, time, and space (Schechner, 1985). The goal is to bring the real actor's body to the virtual body and back. Examples include circumcision, marriage, and funeral ceremonies. Mimetic dramaturgy is a way of reproducing the play of "pretending" (Yudiaryani, 2019). At a somewhat higher stage, this mimetic concept forms the basis of role training methodologies such as Stanislavsky's acting method.

Still, in a linear timeline, the practice of mimetic dramaturgy expands into the practice of epicization dramaturgy and interactive dramaturgy (Yudiaryani, 2023). Epicization dramaturgy releases the fictional world and mimesis becomes representation. This explains why many traditional theatre audiences have difficulty with modern theatre because its embodiment omits the transcendental situation. It is also not surprising that practitioners of other arts such as visual arts, dance, music, architecture, and the environment often like to use Lehmann's post-dramatic epicization. Andrzej T. Wirth, a dramaturg and theatre critic, states that post-dramatic ideas turn the performing arts into an "intermediary instrument" between the stage and the audience. This "address" model replaces the actor's interdialogue on stage. Theatre functions as a complete speaking space between the stage and the audience (*Sprechraum*) (Carlson, 2015; Fernandez, 2016).
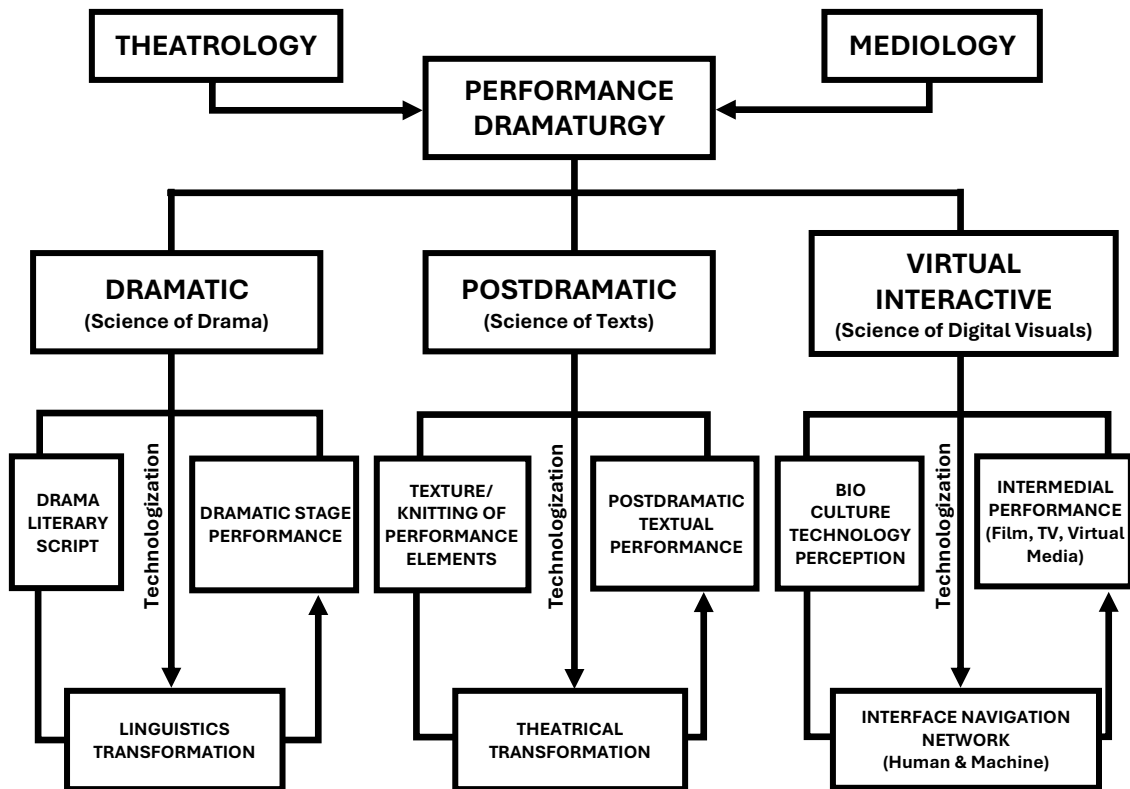
Figure 1. Linear Timeline of Mimetic, Epic, and Interactive Dramaturgy

Expanded Dramaturgy

The expansion of dramaturgy at work is a form of battleground of thought and creativity to win the audience (Case, 2006). Theatre is also a site of formation, that is, a place to give forms (Boyle et al., 2019). Theatre is a space for deep thinking, thinking with other people, thinking through practice, and performative thinking that goes beyond language and definitions (Bleeker, 2023). New Media Dramaturgy is a process of thinking through practice. This is an important argument for an interactive and intermedial reconceptualization of dramaturgy.

Technologized Theatre & Intermediality

The theatre becomes a site of design and a laboratory of intercultural and media with detailed tests of each cultural representation. There is a transformation in its form. Van Kerkoven collaborates the performance with digital technology (Eckersall et al., 2017). The potential of technologization turns it into a multimedia practice (Bay-Cheng et al., 2010). Dramaturgy is understood as the involvement of two cultures—science and technology—which are different but have common ties. The creativity of the new generation of artists is to explore and comment on possible content with a humanitarian agenda, such as environmental destruction, dehumanization, poverty, unemployment, and moral decadence.

Technological devices explore science and culture and significantly envision their usefulness in the future. This technologization phenomenon is a continuous revolution and a way for artists to develop creativity (Hagebölling, 2004). Fernandes (2016) discusses how the deployment of technological devices in intermedial performance influences audience perceptions of the relationship between humans and

technology. Intermedial technology at work mobilizes its embodiment as a techno-dramaturgy strategy to shape the audience's perception of human-machine interaction. This means familiarising humans with machines and humanizing machines (Fernandez, 2016; Waskul & Vannini, 2006).

Mise en scène and The Semiotics of Performance

The success of human-machine interaction is determined by the intermediality of *mise en scène* management. The term *mise en scène* appeared around 1820 in France. his term was taken from the verb "to direct" (*mettre en scène*) which means adapting a literary text for a theatrical performance (Pavis, 2013). *Mise en scène* are performance elements that are considered a system of meaning controlled collectively by the director. This is the adjustment of the theatre to the needs of the stage and audience. *Mise en scène* places theatre into practical work. Today's *mise en scène* plays an important role in the development of creativity and the quality of the audience's reception.

The *mise en scène* function can be carried out if textual analysis of the performance is carried out. Analysis is used not on all elements of theatrical performance, but only on intermedial performance elements, namely body expression techniques, perception, immersive technology, culture, and art. Therefore, several other theories are needed, such as performance technologization, new media dramaturgy, and communication sign systems (Bay-Cheng et al., 2010; de Marinis, 1993).

The diagram below shows the *mise en scène* technologization process of interactive dramaturgy. Visual digitalization utilizes the body, culture, technology, and audience perception to create intermedial performance (Figure 2); that is a part of the timeline of mimetic, epic, and interactive dramaturgy (Figure 1).
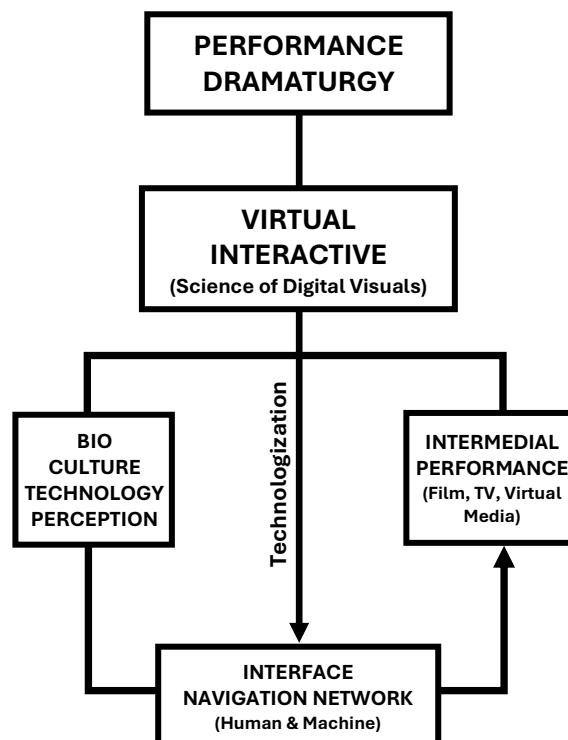

Figure 2. Intermedial Performance Dramaturgy

Bulqini and Mainteater Bandung: Intermedial Digital Performance

Deden Bulqini is an interactive multimedia designer. The scope of his work includes set & lighting design in theatre, dance, music; musical artistic director; performance videos; event design & decoration. As a visual artist who has been involved in various performances for a decade, Bulqini developed the figure of the robot Jack, intensely. Mainteater Bandung itself is a theatre community that provides freedom and openness to new ideas in the form of performance projects.

The flow of development of the *JTDS 4.0 Metamorf* performance started from visual engineering, digital form, sound, and light, which was then broadcasted via an intranet streaming platform. In the process, there was extensive collaboration between musicians, directors, and writers.

In the performance, programming was done by manipulating mock-ups and objects to be projected. The damage to the environment and habitat is the main theme of the show. Metamorphism is an analogy of changes in the structure of nature (space) due to threats from human greed in the form of endless exploitation of nature. In the end, humans always assess what is available on this earth only as numbers or nominal value. This show, with the character Jack, tries to reveal the relationship between the past and the present, from microorganisms to more macro changes.

Bulqini and Mainteater Bandung here further reinforce the principles of textual composition and further enhance the audience's experience. Jack the Robot in this show, which is only about 30 cm high on a floor about 1.5 m high, was first recorded using a camera, then shown with 4 projectors on a four-sided projection screen. The puppeteer or director as operator controls the robot's movements so that it changes into various shapes and sizes; Jack enlarges to the height of the net prepared with the enlargement quality according to Bulqini's perception as director, designer, and puppeteer. Humans and other living creatures (fish, plants) are involved in building the performance ecosystem. (Figure 3).
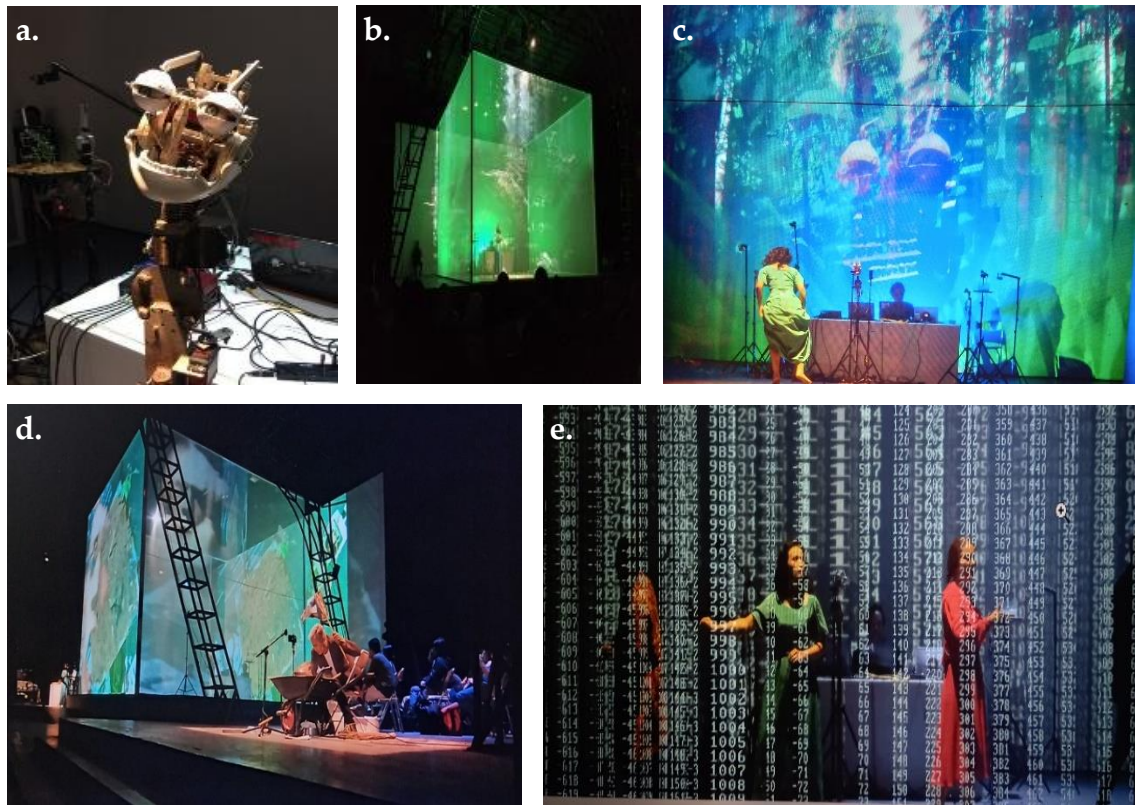
Figure 3. Photos of Jack the Robot Performance

Note. From *JTDS 4.0 Metamorf,* The fourth series of *Jack's True Dream Service* performance. Performed and directed by Deden Bulqini, in collaboration with Mainteater Bandung, August 4-5, 2023. In *ARTJOG 2023* exhibition, June 30 – August 27, 2023, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
Dok. Pius

CONCLUSION

The characteristics of technology that can safeguard artworks for a long time are a major contribution to the existence of performing arts. The technologization of performance often called technologized performance (theatre) changes the paradigm, mindset, and values of society. From what was originally a traditional manifestation, and had a closed, momentary character, it became a modern, contemporary form with an open, intercultural, new intermedia, and eternal character. Dramaturgy, which was originally the science of drama with its transformative and temporary character, transformed itself into an immersive and interactive practical dramaturgy. The impact is the broadening of the definition and meaning of dramaturgy. Performing arts loses the word "art", and establishes itself as performance and work. The artist's creativity extends to the area of production, and work. Thus, dramaturgy becomes a complete embodiment with the integration of theory and practice.

The phenomenon of performance technologization is an ongoing revolution and a way for artists to develop their creativity. The performance of analyzing intermedial relationships is when several media in it perform each other, producing a direct and interactive theatrical composition. The relationship between different media in a multi-track text is ultimately a matter of perception and interpretation, and intermediality is a performance effect created by the audience's perception and interpretation. Relating material aspects between objects and signs is also managed by the experience of the

multimedia designer. In Bulqini's performance, it is evident that intermedial technological performance mobilizes embodiment as a techno-dramaturgy strategy to strengthen the audience's perception of the advantages of human-machine interaction; familiarizing humans with machines, and humanizing machines.

However, this research has limitations. Further research is needed regarding the expansion of the concept of intermedial performance to the creativity of traditional arts, such as Wayang Kulit and Wayang Cinema. Bulqini's use of robot characters and other artists' use of shadow puppet characters have similar meanings and messages, but the choice of material and expression techniques are different. Performance technology is expected to be able to develop dramaturgy, not only as modern theatre but also theatre as a science and as a performance practice.

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