

Press Release for WOYUBU by the Intermedia Performance Studio

The University at Buffalo's Intermedia Performance Studio in collaboration with The Real Dream Cabaret will present the world premiere of **WOYUBU**, performing **Friday, March 13-14, 20-21, & 27-28 @ 8pm** in the Downtown IPSpace - 1716 Main Street. The performance is sponsored by the University at Buffalo and The Robert and Carol Morris Fund for Visual Expression and Performing Arts. Tickets are \$10 (\$5 students & seniors), available at the door. Advance reservations may be made via the show website - woyubu.org/tickets or by phone (716) 568-4855 - and must be claimed 30 minutes prior to each show.

WoyUbu is a collaborative production between the Intermedia Performance Studio (IPS) and the experimental theatre troupe the Real Dream Cabaret. This performance and interactive installation invites audiences to watch or play as we upload Georg Büchner's prescient crime drama, *Woyzeck*, and Alfred Jarry's perverse fantasy, *Ubu Roi*, to the digital world using virtual reality, performing robots, and surveillance technology. Based on newspaper accounts from Germany in the 1830s, *Woyzeck* tells the story of an overworked soldier who kills his mistress in a fit of jealousy. Jarry's *Ubu Roi* is an absurd fantasy of a Macbeth-inspired Pa Ubu who kills the king of Poland and tries to run the kingdom according to his own warped desires (hint: it includes flushing financiers down the toilet).

Mash the two together, and you have WoyUbu, a play performed in separate but connected spaces, mediated through projections and video feeds. Individual audience members have a choice: either to watch *Woyzeck*'s crime drama as it plays out in live action and projection, while having little say in the events. Or, to venture to the other side of the wall, the interactive digital dream realm of Ubu, where low-resolution surveillance cameras and video game controls send feedback to and from *Woyzeck*'s grim reality.

Will you watch or play?

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The Intermedia Performance Studio is dedicated to exploring the role of technology and digital communication in live performance contexts. With the intersection of embodied and digital performance, we are particularly invested in the paradigm of games as a (if not *the*) dominant means of social connection, communication and engagement. Rather than disdaining the pervasiveness of games in daily life, we see games as the means to explore key aspects of daily life. For example, is your cell phone the means to achieve ultimate freedom? A leash for work? A tool to play with friends? Even so-called "old media" (i.e., cinema and television) have incorporated and refined game-playing from quiz shows to new forms of narrative. In such a context, do we see all the world as a game? What happens to live, social interactions in the context of a digital gaming culture?

It is within this context that we create theatre for a new generation of audiences. We adamantly oppose didactic theatre that claims to know more than its audience, and we object to the idea that new technologies should remain in the hands of only a few "digital elite." We, therefore, make work about things we don't know (but find fascinating) placing new technologies in the hands of our actors and audiences. Performances therefore exist in two simultaneous frames: on the one hand our work is a performance that asks questions of the digital culture; on the other, we expose the workings of the performance to audience control. Our collaborators include a diverse range of artists, technologists, and educators all of whom are committed to innovative new work that engages audiences as fellow collaborators.

We can all play the game.

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WoyUbu is directed by Sarah Bay-Cheng with a script adapted from Georg Büchner's *Woyzeck* and Alfred Jarry's *Ubu Roi* by Josephine Anstey, Sarah Bay-Cheng, and Holly Johnson. *Woyzeck* is played by Joe Wiens with Marie, and other characters performed by Kate LoConti. All Ubu characters are performed by members of the Real Dream Cabaret. Digital images for the production are designed and supervised by Dave Pape, with film and video by Brian Milbrand, costume and puppet designs by Holly Johnson, and live original music composed and performed by David Kane. Josephine Anstey supervises technical operations, including performing robotics supervised by Stuart C. Shapiro (UB's Department of Computer Science and Engineering) and Debbie Burhans (Computer Science Department at Canisius College).

The Intermedia Performance Studio is sponsored by the University at Buffalo (UB) Departments of Media Study, Theatre & Dance, and Computer Science and Engineering and was originally founded with an Interdisciplinary Research and Development grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research at UB. **WoyUbu**, including its presence in the Main Street IPSpace, has been generously supported by The Robert and Carol Morris Fund for Artistic Expression and Performing Arts. Additional funding for related research and production has been provided by the Digital Humanities Institute and the Humanities Institute (both of UB). Creative and technical collaborators for the project include the Real Dream Cabaret, David Kane (original compositions and live music), the SNeRG Research Group at UB (Dir. Stuart C. Shapiro) and the Robotics Lab at Canisius College (Dir. Debra T. Burhans).

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