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‘Mediatised live’
Is the need for liveness dying?

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Abstract:

When live theatre is broadcast in real time at cinemas around the world, there is a gap in the current terminology. 'Mediatised live' is a new expression, established in this thesis, to name the media form which has revolutionised the way of experiencing live theatre by broadcasting theatre live to venues around the world. By asking the question 'Is the need for liveness dying?' this thesis investigates how mediatised live affects how audiences experience liveness and how the need for liveness is changing. Primarily, this thesis is based on a performance analysis of Sonia Friedman Productions' *Hamlet*, played at Barbican Centre, London 2015 and the mediatised live version at Kino, Lund, Sweden. This performance analysis will be compared towards an audience survey from another mediatised live performance, *Phèdre*, in 2009. This will be contextualised using theories from scholars who have been examining an opposition between live and mediatised since the entry of mediatised theatre, such as Philip Auslander and Susan Sontag. The need for presence, which is a key element for live, is examined by the words of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Amelia Jones, also scholars interested in performances in different forms. Finally, this thesis discusses the contradictory results of the performance analysis and the audience survey. The performance analysis favours the live but the survey favours the mediatised live. How this is seen in the actual performances of *Hamlet* is described, and since the need for liveness seems not to be dying but developing, this thesis is closed with a speculation on what the future holds for live theatre.

Key words: mediatised live, live, mediatised, performance, NT Live, theatre, cinema, television, performance theory

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introductory outline of the problem

When I see the curtains rise for the second time - but this time from the comfort of Kino's cinema chair - I expect my fellow audience members to inhale in wonderment as I did a month earlier at Barbican Stage. This was not the case. Concerned by the lack of commitment from the audience, I wonder if this experience can match the live one?

Mediatized live, a term I introduce in this thesis, is a form of media which originates from theatre, film and television. By broadcasting live theatre performances in real time, theatre goes through another stage of development, and just as cinema and television did, mediatized live alters how audiences experience and value the element of liveness. Historically, there has been a binary opposition between live and mediatized culture which has not only impacted on the way we experience culture, but also the cultural expression itself¹. Live performance is constantly changing, adapting to new patterns of experiencing culture, and trying to find a solid position within the cultural economy. Visual performances in various forms have been broadcast live since the beginning of television, but a contemporary trend is to live-stream cultural events at local cinemas. This pursues the ambition of democratising live performances while still offering a sense of social happening. While the reasons for seeing something live are getting fewer due to the increased mediatization, the defence for liveness has taken on mythical characteristics. Surrounded by what media scholar Philip Auslander calls clichés, such as 'community' spirit, 'the magic of live theatre' and the 'energy'², the live performance today has to try and re-establish more concrete reasons for its being. Live-streaming, as mentioned above, is one of these. In this thesis, the aim is to examine one piece of live-broadcast theatre. *Hamlet*, produced by Sonia Friedman Productions, was broadcast at local cinemas throughout the world by National Theatre Live (NT Live) in 2015. With this performance in mind, this thesis strives to answer the question: is the need for liveness dying?

1.2 The Case Study

Sonia Friedman Productions' *Hamlet* was hosted at Barbican Centre, London between 5th August 2015 and 31st October 2015. With famous personalities both on- and off-stage, the production was a public success. After selling out in record time the interest for the

¹ P Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. 2nd ed, London; New York, Routledge, 1999, p. 3.

² Ibid, p. 2.

production became even greater when the The Sky Arts £10 ticket ballot opened.³ 43,000 people joined the lottery and several online guides were published from different sources on how to get a ticket to the sold out show.⁴ Another opportunity to see the show was to see the live broadcast. October 15th 2015, a new record of 225,000 viewers saw the production at local cinemas all over the world.⁵

The reason for choosing this performance is because I had the opportunity to experience the show at Barbican Centre, London and at my local cinema Kino in Lund, Sweden. This enabled me to examine what remains, disappears and is added, physically, visually and auratically, when seeing the mediatised live version.

1.3 Background

The opposition between live and mediatised has been investigated and questioned since live performance first was transferred into new mediums, such as cinema and tv. A frequent approach when studying the phenomenon is to apply a fixed theoretical framework to several live performances to prove a point. This rarely offers a full understanding of one specific mediatised piece and focuses instead on the theories applied. The texts I refer to are written as conceptual investigations of the terms *live* and *mediatised* and are therefore not trying to review a specific show. Rather, they strive to equip readers with tools to analyse the specific aspects of a show themselves. The theory-based strategy can be seen in one of today's most dominant texts about live versus mediatised, *Liveness* by Philip Auslander from 1999⁶, but also historically, in texts by Susan Sontag.⁷ Auslander examines what status live performance has in a culture dominated by mass media. He does not only examine theatre performances, but also sport events, rock concerts and courtroom situations. He suggests that live and mediatised are becoming one and the same and also writes the history of how live theatre moulded the mediatised theatre and film. On the other hand, Sontag wrote her article 'Film and Theatre' in 1966, arguing that theatre can never be translated into another medium. She uses theories of Erwin Panofsky, usually associated with Art History, to examine the opposition between live and mediatised. Panofsky refers to the formal differences between seeing a play and seeing a movie at the cinema. Sontag comments by saying his reduction to formal conditions might by

³ D O'Brian, 'Benedict Cumberbatch's Hamlet at Barbican sells out in record time', in *Evening Standard*, 13 August 2014, [accessed 27 October 2015] <<http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/theatre/hamlet-at-the-barbican-benedict-cumberbatch-effect-sees-play-become-most-in-demand-theatre-event-9662839.html>>.

⁴ Barbican Theatre, 'Hamlet Sky Art £10 ticket ballot'. [received 19-06-2015]

⁵ J Gerard, 'Benedict Cumberbatch Draws Record Audience For NT Live "Hamlet" Screenings', in *Deadline*, 16 October 2015, [accessed 2 November 2015] <<http://deadline.com/2015/10/benedict-cumberbatch-hamlet-record-screenings-nt-live-1201585579/>>.

⁶ P Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. 2nd ed, London; New York, Routledge, 1999.

⁷ S Sontag, 'Film and Theatre'. in *The Tulane Drama Review*, 11, 1966, pp. 24–37.

over-simplifying, but she finds value in his approach to theatre as a literary concept and cinema as visual concept.

Instead of following this pre-existing system (primarily focusing on theory and not one specific show) this thesis takes one specific show, *Hamlet*, and analyses the experience of seeing it in two different media formats.

As indicated above, the study of liveness is interdisciplinary. For example, Auslander's research is influenced by other scholars from disciplines such as communications, film studies, audio studies, visual culture and, naturally, art history. Walter Benjamin's seminal essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'⁸ examines the quintessence of Auslander's questions: is there loss of a higher cultural value when art is mediatised? The frameworks from phenomenology and perception have been used to investigate liveness and its relation to the moving image culture. Vivian Sobchack, an American cinema and media theorist, discusses phenomenology and spectatorship in her book *Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*.⁹ She focuses on the physicality of the body in experiencing, perceiving, and making sense of today's moving-image culture. However, 'perception' - both as term and concept - is interdisciplinary in itself. Amelia Jones, feminist art historian, discusses the advantages of not being physically present at a live performance in her essay "Presence" in *Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation*.¹⁰ Rather, she suggests the second hand spectator have an advantage over the first hand spectator - the objectivity. Further, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, author of *Production of Presence*,¹¹ examines the relationship between presence effects and meaning effects. He elaborates on the term of presence mostly in terms of literary experiences, but his ideas and warnings about over-interpreting cultural experiences concern art and performances as well. I interpret his position as emphasising presence over interpreting which is relevant to this thesis since presence influence the perception of a show.

1.4 Purpose of study

This thesis investigates the idea of opposition between live and mediatised with a focus on need - or the absence of need - for live experiences. Primarily, it surveys the movement to disregard live experiences: is the need for liveness dying? Subsequently, it considers what

⁸ W Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version' in MW Jennings, M Doherty, TY Levin (ed.), *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 19-55.

⁹ V Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004.

¹⁰ A Jones, "Presence" in *Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation*, in *Art Journal*, 56, 1997, pp. 11-18.

¹¹ HU Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford, Calif, Stanford University Press, 2004.

remains, disappears and is added in live mediated experiences? Did the concept of liveness mould the mediated live? Or is the mediated live emancipated from live completely? And finally, what does the future look like for live theatre?

1.5 Theories and methods

The main material investigated in this thesis is the two performances of *Hamlet*, at Barbican Centre and at the cinema Kino. These two performances will be analysed by me using the Danish theatre scholar Michael Eigtved's method for performance analysis.¹² Rather than of observing the actors' achievements and single aesthetic qualities in the production, it surveys the expectations of the audience and the relationships between performers and the audience. This analysis will be compared with a report made by Nesta, one of the contributing partner's to NT Live, which surveyed audience experiences of National Theatre's production of *Phèdre*.¹³ The report will be used to answer questions regarding what socio-demographic groups are present at the different events and what their experiences were like. As a complement, I will use press material and news articles regarding the production of *Hamlet*. These, in combination with material from Kino describing their operation, will be the bases for understanding the context surrounding *Hamlet*.

The results I receive from my analysis will be interpreted by using different theories regarding live and mediated. To understand the fundamentals, Max Liljefors book *Videokonsten* will be used to draw a short history of television and film.¹⁴ I establish the term *mediated live*, the form of media I categorise the cinematic *Hamlet* as, which is defined as live performance broadcast somewhere else in real time. It is not yet an academically established term but since the phenomenon can not be categorised as any other existing media form, there is a gap in the present terminology. Philip Auslander discusses theatre as a medium and it's development into theatre and film in his book *Liveness*.¹⁵ His theories of the opposition between live and mediated plays a large part in my investigation of whether theatre moulded television, film and mediated live or if they have emancipated from theatre. His bibliography has also provided further sources for this text since he covers many topics and directions of liveness. He is suggesting that live and mediated are becoming one, while another theorist, Susan Sontag, proclaims that theatre could never be translated into a new medium.¹⁶ Written in 1966, she was definitely ahead of her time, predicting the developments

¹² M Eigtved, *Forestillingsanalyse*. Fredriksberg; Denmark, Samfundslitteratur, 2007.

¹³ 'Culture of Innovation | Nesta.' [accessed 23 November 2015]. <<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/culture-innovation>>

¹⁴ M Liljefors, *Videokonsten: En introduktion*. Lund, Studentlitteratur, 2005.

¹⁵ P Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*. 2nd ed, London; New York, Routledge, 1999.

¹⁶ S Sontag, 'Film and Theatre'. in *The Tulane Drama Review*, 11, 1966, pp. 24–37.

of live. This discussion is finished by introducing aspects of the market. Fredric Jameson, a marxist scholar, discusses the point when fine arts (such as theatre) become aware of their status as a commodity.¹⁷ Cultural expression plays a certain role in a commercialised society and theatre is not outside this mass-media system, even though Sontag would prefer this.

Further, I contrast two theorist's thoughts on presence against each other, namely Amelia Jones and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht. Presence is a key factor when investigating first and second hand performances and these two theorists have different approaches. To Gumbrecht, presence is important and he values it as high as interpretation, if not higher. Over-interpreting is a trend he loathes in our contemporary society and he advocate for experiences which affect your body and senses.¹⁸ Jones, on the other hand, is a frontman for second hand experiences. She even suggests the second hand spectator have an advantage over the first hand spectator - the objectivity.¹⁹ By using these theories, I try to answer the question 'is the need for liveness dying?'

1.6 Disposition

As mentioned above, the main material for this thesis is the comparative analysis between live and mediatised *Hamlet*. I start in chapter one ('The Evolution of Liveness') with establishing the evolution and context of mediatised live. By surveying how mediatised live relates to live, I develop a fundamental understanding of how the performance analysis can be interpreted. In chapter two ('First and Second Hand Experiences'), I focus on the most crucial differences between experiencing *Hamlet* at the theatre and through mediatised live. The term 'presence', which is key to understanding these differences, is investigated and problematised. The third part constitutes my performance analysis of the live and mediatised *Hamlet* by following Michael Eigtved's template. In chapter four ('Democratisation of Live Performances'), I discuss in general terms the democratisation of live. I also present a summary of the Nesta report regarding the results of the first NT Live broadcast which I compare with my own performance analysis. Lastly, I summarise what the over-all result of NT Live is and reflect about the future of live.

¹⁷ F Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, Duke University Press, 1992.

¹⁸ HU Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford, Calif, Stanford University Press, 2004.

¹⁹ A Jones, "Presence" in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation' in *Art Journal*, 56, 1997, pp. 11-18.

2. Examination

2.1 The evolution of liveness

2.1.1 The development of theatre

The relationships between live theatre, television and movies differ from each other. Therefore, from a historical perspective, the developments take on different forms. They correlate with contemporary economical and technological evolvments allowing the evolution to reflect its social climate. The entry of cinema had major impact on live theatre in the 1890's as did television in the 1930's. These new media forms were affected by the medium which they originated, namely theatre. Either, cinema and tv was, and still is, moulded by live theatre or maybe they are emancipated from the source? Obviously, this is important to investigate in more general terms to understand mediatised live's historical context and it's ability to develop.

Cinema, or movies, was developed rapidly during the nineteenth century. The concept of movies as we know them today was patented by Louis and Auguste Lumière in 1895. As a media form for reproduction it became, together with photography, a keystone in the commodity based society.

Television, an accessible hybrid of previously existing media forms, became a certain part of most households in the 1960s. This made the new media form a prime candidate for mass-education but also for mass-sales.²⁰ The technique spread in Europe during the 1930's but was interrupted by World War II. Primarily live broadcast, TV almost guaranteed authenticity and was not overly processed, as movies could be.²¹ The slightly marxist and romantic dream of television as the most democratic art form influenced the way television developed and merged with the broadcasting of live theatre. Initially filmed through full frontality, the screen of the television constituted the borders of the stage. This could increase the sense of distance between the actual event and the spectator for pure physical reasons. As camera techniques advanced, this sensation was replaced by intimacy as a result of the first filmed close-ups. This resulted in a changed style of acting. Sometimes exaggerated acting could be replaced by a more realistic performances since the body language no longer needed to be overexplicit to be seen.²²

²⁰ Liljefors, pp. 11-14.

²¹ Auslander, p. 18.

²² Sontag, pp. 24-25.

2.1.2 Moulded or emancipated?

On one side, arguing for how live theatre moulded mediatised live, is Philip Auslander. According to him, liveness started out being the key component to television. This can be seen in the set designs of early television, staged as stages and not studios. Later, the direction of influence changed.²³ As screen-based media forms, such as television, started to be the dominant source for visual culture, the stage started adapting its elements. Today, many live performance sets are designed to both contain these elements (photographs and moving images) but also to be easily transferred to them.²⁴ This is evidence for Susan Sontag's theories regarding the mediatised emancipation from live. In her opinion, live and mediatised (theatre and television) can not be compared. She refers to Erwin Panofsky's claim for how theatre is liberated from the mediatised impurities.²⁵ Consequently, since the main component for theatre is (frequently) humans, the connections between theatre and television conflict. When subjects become objects, Sontag conceives the relation between live and mediatised theatre as the difference between a live human and a Madame Tussauds' wax doll. She claims that meeting someone live, or seeing live theatre, gives you audio and visual stimulation while a wax doll, tv and film is primarily visual.²⁶ Though, my own experience is that nothing less captivating as a muted television.

With this bold assumption in mind, it is safe to say that the answer to whether theatre moulded the mediatised, or if these forms of media are emancipated from theatre is a complex one. According to Sontag, what links them together is that these mediums are not based on single visual images. Rather, it is a matter of how they connect to each other.²⁷

2.1.3 Does it really matter?

Meanwhile, other scholars considers live and mediatised as part of the same medium and discourse. The marxist scholar Fredric Jameson discusses the point when fine arts become conscious of themselves as part of the mediatised and commercialised society. In this way, he disagrees with Sontag, who places live performances as part of a system existing outside of the mass media discourse. Instead, Jameson refers to one of the Marxist fundamentals, namely the establishment of theatre as a commodity. The live-broadcast theatre is therefore just another confirmation of the commodification of art.²⁸ Not even theatre is outside the economic

²³ Auslander, pp. 21-22.

²⁴ Ibid, pp. 25-27.

²⁵ Sontag, pp. 24-25.

²⁶ Ibid, pp. 25-27.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

²⁸ Jameson, pp. 161-163.

system. Instead, according to Auslander, it is the same audiences and the same funds, therefore making it the same system.²⁹

2.2 First and second hand experiences

The previous discussion has been focused on the opposition between live and mediated. To elaborate further, this section of my thesis focuses on how live and mediated events can be studied. Here, a first hand experience refers to a direct experience, in this case, seeing *Hamlet* live in London. The second hand experiences refers to the mediated, in this case, seeing the staged event of *Hamlet* at the cinema. There are some margin of errors around these definitions. Seeing *Hamlet* in the cinema is a first encounter as well since it is the first time seeing the show in that context. Also, from a phenomenological point of view, the experience of sitting in the cinema chair, surrounded by other audience members like yourself, is a first experience as well but this will be set aside for keeping clarity in the text.

A frontman for studying a live performance on a second hand basis is Amelia Jones, specialising in feminist body/performance art. She argues in her text 'Presence' in Absentia' that the documented materials - the second hand version - is equal to the real event. She even claims the second hand spectator has an objective advantage. The first hand spectator has an unmediated experience and can therefore gain phenomenological understanding between spectator, object and context³⁰. Instead, Jones is referring to the second hand objective spectator who has the benefit of hindsight.

While the viewer of a live performance may seem to have certain advantages in understanding such a context, on a certain level she may find it more difficult to comprehend the histories/narratives/processes she is experiencing until later, when she too can look back and evaluate them with hindsight. [...] We "invent" these patterns, pulling the past together into a manageable picture, retrospectively.³¹

Jones use of the term 'presence' complicates things. In its most basic form, 'presence' is a matter of physically being there when it happens. It touches on an auratic definition as well, a matter of *feeling* presence. This can according to Jones be obtained in second hand experiences as well, and a first hand experience does not necessarily guarantee it. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht,

²⁹ Auslander, p. 6.

³⁰ Jones, p. 12.

³¹ Ibid, p. 12.

author of *Production of Presence*, claims a complicated opposition between meaning (interpretation) and presence.

For us, presence phenomena always come as “presence effects” because they are necessarily surrounded by, wrapped into, and perhaps even mediated. [...] [by] meaning. It is extremely difficult - if not impossible - for us *not* to ‘read’, not to try and attribute meaning [...]³²

According to Gumbrecht, this means that interpreting a piece is not enough. Interpretation needs ‘presence’, the dimension where experiences have an impact on the spectator's body and senses. While Jones argues that presence is not necessary to read a piece, Gumbrecht wants to emphasize presence above reading.

2.3 Performance analysis of Hamlet

2.3.1 Defining Eigtved's method

Hamlet, produced by Sonia Friedman Productions and directed by Lyndsey Turner, was staged at Barbican Centre, London between 5 August and 31 October 2015, and I saw the live performance on the 10 September. Founded and funded by The City of London Corporation in 1982, Barbican Centre is a landmark for London's cultural scene and British heritage.³³ Covering many cultural fields, with galleries, stages, cinemas and learning centres, Barbican Centre as an institution is seen as a stamp of quality for the events and performances hosted there.

This production of *Hamlet* was highly anticipated, mostly because Benedict Cumberbatch, playing Hamlet, was one of Great Britain's most acclaimed actors at the time. William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is considered a hoop every great actor must jump through in his career, and the public, consisting mainly of his established fan base, were delighted this was Cumberbatch's time. Collaborating with The Sky Arts £10 ticket ballot, 43,000 people joined a lottery³⁴ to win reserved tickets to every performance after regular tickets had sold

³² Gumbrecht, p. 106.

³³ ‘Barbican - about the barbican - history’. [accessed 4 November 2015]. <<http://www.barbican.org.uk/about-barbican/history>>

³⁴ Barbican Theatre, ‘Hamlet Sky Art £10 ticket ballot’. [received 19-06-2015]

out at record speed.³⁵ These tickets, much cheaper than regulars, can be seen as an attempt to increase the diversity of audience members. Parallel to this, 30 seats a day were sold to ambitious buyers queuing in front of Barbican's box office on the day of the performance. The line was formed around 3 pm every morning and the box office opened 10.30 am.³⁶

Hamlet is a tragedy featuring many themes but is often interpreted as an tale of madness, love and loss, though Turner lifted it's comedic sides in this production. My first impressions after leaving the live version of *Hamlet* is easiest declared in previously mentioned clichés: 'a spiritual experience', 'showed the magic of theatre' and 'had indescribable energy'. With this experience resonating in me, this performance analysis will focus on how the first hand performance diverged from my second hand view at Kino, Lund, Sweden the 15th of October.

Kino, a minor independent cinema, broadcast live performances from notable cultural venues around the world, such as Barbican Centre³⁷. By the initiative of National Theatre Live (NT Live), *Hamlet* was broadcast live to 225,000 spectators at once.³⁸ To investigate how these two experiences relate to one another this analysis will use methods established by Michael Eigtved in his *Forestillningsanalyse*.³⁹ Instead of observing the actors' achievements and single aesthetic qualities in the production, it surveys the expectations and experiences of the audience and relations between performers and the audience. His analysis is based on a triangle with the corners Expectations and Predestinations, The Performance and The Audience.

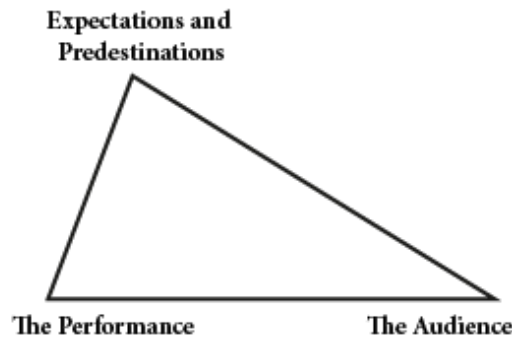
³⁵ D O'Brian, 'Benedict Cumberbatch's Hamlet at Barbican sells out in record time', in *Evening Standard*, 13 August 2014, [accessed 27 October 2015] <<http://www.standard.co.uk/goingout/theatre/hamlet-at-the-barbican-benedict-cumberbatch-effect-sees-play-become-most-in-demand-theatre-event-9662839.html>>

³⁶ 'An insider's guide to queuing for day tickets to Benedict Cumberbatch's "Hamlet" at the Barbican', in *Time Out London*. [accessed 18 November 2015]. <<http://www.timeout.com/london/blog/an-insiders-guide-to-queuing-for-day-tickets-to-benedict-cumberbatchs-hamlet-at-the-barbican-081115>>

³⁷ 'Kino & Södran'. in *Kino.nu*, [accessed 4 November 2015]. <<http://kino.nu/live-pa-bio>>

³⁸ J Gerard, 'Benedict Cumberbatch Draws Record Audience For NT Live "Hamlet" Screenings', in *Deadline*, 16 October 2015, [accessed 2 November 2015] <<http://deadline.com/2015/10/benedict-cumberbatch-hamlet-record-screenings-nt-live-1201585579/>>

³⁹ Eigtved, p. 121.



Source: M Eigtved, *Forestillingsanalyse*, 2007, 122.

Firstly, I start by examining the differences in expectations between the first- and second hand experience by surveying the venues, the salons and the genre expectations. Secondly, I discuss the actual performances. By comparing the sense of dynamic, immediateness and milieu the goal is to discover what remains, disappears and is added. Third, and finally, Eigtved's method returns to the audience. Considering this thesis does not focus on reception of the general play, I target details, which change in the second hand performance and how the spectators perceive them instead.⁴⁰

2.3.2 Expectations

Expectation is a key component for cultural experiences and seeing a play at Barbican Centre breeds certain expectations, and going to the cinema breeds others. Correspondingly, visiting Barbican Centre requires some commitments. Though no dress code is announced, the spectator is expected to look presentable according to the standard social code for a theatre performance. In Kino, these expectations are not so apparent. This is a result of the institutions themselves. Barbican Centre, with its prestige and reputation, leads the visitor to reflect common social code while Kino, a small-scale local cinema, does not. To me, this became a class indicator which was apparent in the intermission as well. A theatre audience normally expects an intermission, but for a cinema visitor, this falls outside the norm. Therefore, Kino does not offer the resources I frequently associate with a theatre, namely hot and cold quality beverages and light snacking, which makes the intermission at Kino slightly unrefined. Barbican Centre foyer is built to hold a full crowd mingling within grand floor space and high ceilings, while Kino is a cinema with a foyer built to transport its audience in and out of their seats as effectively as possible. I see this difference in the actual architecture as well. Barbican Centre, part memorial and part cultural centre, poses as a monument for

⁴⁰ Eigtved, pp. 122-126.

British brutalistic architecture.⁴¹ On the other hand, Kino does not carry the same prestige. Opened in 1994 and renovated 2000 it includes two small salons and a bistro.⁴² Barbican Centre has its own underground station while Kino, intermixed between a pharmacy and a bank, does not carry the same geographical status.

Furthermore, the most dominant expectation for *Hamlet* comes from its status as a blockbuster. Only a small percentage of spectators got the opportunity to see the show live and it immediately raised the productions status and sense of exclusivity. I felt slightly privileged at Barbican Centre since most of us, myself included, had worked hard to secure tickets. Critics did not praise the play but the vast majority of the audience did.⁴³ Due to the lack of tickets, I expected a full salon, which a live production can not guarantee because of human factors. Ironically, the Barbican salon was not full, neither at the actual performance or in the filmed audience on broadcasting night. Kino, on the other hand, filled up quickly. Also, the stage itself appeared different at Kino. My first impression of the actual Barbican Stage was its monumentality - the same monumentality which caused the instinctive inhalation expressed in the opening of this thesis. Set designer Es Devlin transformed the solid stage structure from one act to another with small adjustments and took advantage of its monumental size. Therefore, deciding what visual element to focus on was complicated at times but the stage becomes slightly minimised when translated to the cinema screen at Kino. The genre expectations are also important. Seeing something of Shakespeare live in a theatre does carry a certain amount of status. Going to the cinema to catch a movie a Thursday night does not.

2.3.3 The Performance

The visual entirety is reduced when *Hamlet* is transferred to screen. As a result of the selected view of the biased camera, I, the spectator, could not decide for myself what to look at. The subjective and instinctive choice of the spectator can - of course - deliver very different feelings of involvement and understanding. For instance, Hamlet's entrance in the beginning of act three, is key to seeing Hamlet's gradual madness. Instead of seeing Hamlet slowly creating his fantasy world, I am given close-ups of Claudius suspecting Hamlet's action are based on more than unrequited love. In a way, this speaks both for and against the live experience. In the cinematic *Hamlet* you are guaranteed the production team's way of seeing the performance, sometimes considered 'the right way', while the live performance does not offer complete freedom for the gaze due to the restricted view from many seats. For me, this

⁴¹ 'Barbican - About the Barbican - History'. [accessed 4 November 2015]. <<http://www.barbican.org.uk/about-barbican/history>>

⁴² 'Kino & Södran'. in *Kino.nu*, [accessed 4 November 2015]. <<http://kino.nu/live-pa-bio>>

⁴³'Hamlet'. in *Time Out London*, [accessed 9 November 2015].<<http://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/hamlet-43>>

meant a partly blocked view of the left side of the stage. On the other hand, the auditive entirety was also affected by the transfer of media. Except for the broadcast performance, all was done without microphones. At the Barbican Stage, this offered me a sensation of individual presence. Also, by not using an audio system for speech, the risks of technical disturbances were eliminated. Hence, the audio system used for speech on the broadcasting night was full of disruption, such as statics, delays and mobile interference.

Additionally, I feel that the dynamic between characters was extracted differently between live and mediated. The details, such as Hamlet's gaze at Claudius during the play's own theatre performance, was far more detectable in the cinema version because of its obvious visibility. Although, I failed to keep the sensation of who was present on stage since a full-scaled image of the stage was rarely shown. For example, when Hamlet stands guard in the watchtower, the wedding feast is raging downstairs creating a feeling of distastefulness so short after a funeral. In the second hand version, we only see Hamlet and therefore lose the feeling of foulness. Instead, the cinematic version introduces interruptions in the form of clips between camera angles which the spectator must mentally put together to create the scene. As a contrast to the cinematic cut, the live piece proceeds organically with a uniform narrative and set changes made by the actors themselves, as they were refurbishing a room. Sometimes, the camera sweeps over the stage to create the illusion of a sweeping gaze but the individual's decision on where to look can not be replaced by cameras, never neutral. It also focuses primarily on the character who is speaking which loses the dimension of side-acting by other characters. The distancing effect from alterations of the stage are also lost. Suddenly, an entire theatre stage has disappeared from stage. Where did it go?

2.3.4 The devil is in the details

Turner's complete disregard of linear time in the visual elements allows the details to speak for themselves. 1940's fashion mixed with Renaissance dresses and contemporary wind jackets consolidates Turner's ideal of design after content and the connotations it extends. Choosing style after expectation (eg. an outsider wears toiled contemporary clothes) next to a character dressed from another époque (eg. a queen wearing a stately Renaissance dress) allows the story to transcend above time. In like manner, this is reflected but also disregarded in the cinematic version. The spectator is rarely presented with a panorama of the stage and all characters. This offers a unique opportunity to see the detailed costumes but not always how they relate to each other. I see this in the dinner scene, act one, where Hamlet is dressed in fastidious black in honour of his demised father, while the other guests wear stately white to celebrate the new couple. In the mediated live version, I see close-ups of Hamlet (in black),

Gertrude and Claudius (in wedding white) but the general attitude towards the new marriage is stated in the dress of the royal court (also in white), which unfortunately is not given much exposure.

In the cinematic version, the character studies showed the effort each actor/actress put in. Sweat, saliva and tears were present at all times and made me feel as the second hand experience was more 'real' since these intimate details became apparent to everyone. The gradually increasing madness of Hamlet, but especially Ophelia, were also more visible as a result of these close-ups.

Despite this, the closeness and intimacy also has a distancing effect. When most is showed in great detail in the cinematic version, I ask myself what is not represented? Pointers are given throughout the mediatised performance on what visual elements are bearing on the plot by reappearing, for example Hamlet's dagger. However, some of them are excluded which results in a less uniform performance. The most important one is in the scene where Hamlet is delivering a monologue while the theatre company rehearse in the background. All focus is on Hamlet, but if you watch the company, they recreate what appears to be the final scenes of the play in slow motion. This was completely left out of the cinematic version and was a defining moment for the live performance.

2.4 Democratising live performances

2.4.1 Introduction

The question of what remains, disappears and is added in a second hand production is based in a broader phenomenological question: In what ways do live cinema differ from live theater? Furthermore, phenomenology is based on the belief that all knowledge and truth derives from subjective human experience and not solely from things themselves. Nothing can therefore be objective.⁴⁴ This is certainly applicable in the investigation of *Hamlet* since it relies on my subjective observations.

There are many reasons for turning live into mediatised live. It might be done for status increase for the production, for financial matters but also for purely democratic reasons. As a result, *Hamlet* can not only be seen worldwide, NT Live tries to create a theatre which is not an high-class medium, but a cultural arena where everyone gets a front row experience.

⁴⁴ M Sturken & L Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford; New York, OUP Oxford, 2000, p. 135.

2.4.2 National Theatre Live and the Nesta report

NT Live was founded by David Sable in 2009 with help from National Theatre, Nesta (an innovation charity) and Arts Council England. After seeing Live in HD by Metropolitan Opera he wanted to develop theatre the same way The Metropolitan developed opera. The aim was not to replace the first hand experience but to create a second hand experience worth watching.⁴⁵ The first performance, *Phèdre*, was broadcast live via satellite to cinemas on June 25th, 2009. To evaluate the results, a survey was made to compare the live experience with the mediated live experience. It strives to answer questions such as ‘Does the NT Live initiative bring in new socio-demographics?’ and ‘Does NT Live give audiences new and valued cultural experiences?’. To investigate this, a total of 1216 responses were collected from theatre-goers (hereinafter ‘TGs’) and a total of 1316 responses were collected from cinema-goers (hereinafter ‘CGs’). Since mediated live was a new medium and required more questions, it took 12 minutes for the TGs and 19 minutes for the CGs to complete the digital survey created by Nesta themselves.⁴⁶

Phèdre had, just as *Hamlet*, a prominent star appeal. While *Hamlet* had Cumberbatch, *Phèdre* had Helen Mirren who was at the height of her career. These were the results:

Table 1: Expectations and actual outcome

Expectation/outcome	Theatre audience		Cinema audience	
	Expected %	Actual %	Expected %	Actual %
To enjoy a social experience with others	24.3	80.0	26.2	81.2
To have an emotional experience	68.9	85.3	47.4	95.3
To have immersive experience	51.6	66.7	28.1	85.3

Source: ‘Culture of Innovation | Nesta’, 33.

Evidently, the results benefitted NT Live. Each group claimed the actual experience to be more sociable, more emotional and more immersive than expected. The expectations for NT Live were generally lower than for the live show, making mediated live a surprising success.

⁴⁵ TEDx Talks, *Infusing Theatre into Digital Mediums: David Sabel at TEDxBroadway*. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haShNYEKs1c>> [accessed 23 November 2015].

⁴⁶ ‘Culture of Innovation | Nesta’. <<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/culture-innovation>> [accessed 23 November 2015]. pp. 29-30

Table 2: Experiences of *Phèdre*

Reported experience/opinion	Theatre audience			Cinema audience		
	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Total agreeing %	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Total agreeing %
I was totally absorbed	38.0	39.2	77.2	60.6	31.5	92.1
I felt an emotional response to the play	27.7	45.0	72.7	46.1	42.1	88.2
Didn't understand what artists were trying to convey	1.1	3.3	4.4	1.0	2.5	3.5
Transported to another world and lost track of time	12.1	35.7	47.8	23.3	39.9	63.2
Made me think of new ways of seeing things	5.4	27.3	32.7	12.4	39.2	51.6
Seeing in the company of an audience increased enjoyment	11.2	45.2	56.4	14.2	45.6	59.8
Did not engage intellectually	2.7	9.1	11.8	3.3	6.0	9.3
Wanted to talk about what I'd seen and experienced	26.3	57.0	83.3	41.5	48.4	89.9
My creativity was stimulated by the experience	10.4	30.3	40.7	17.4	37.9	55.3
I felt a bond with performers	11.3	40.4	51.7	19.0	51.1	70.1
Watching on screen would give/gave sense of what live theatre is like	2.8	13.1	15.9	14.5	42.7	57.2
Being in cinema very different from seeing play live	40.2	49.3	89.5	25.3	53.9	79.2
Experience met expectations	34.8	41.6	76.4	42.5	47.0	89.5
Cinema opens new ways of seeing this artform	18.8	55.2	74.0	63.8	32.8	96.6
Felt real excitement because knew performance live	-	-	-	43.6	40.7	84.3

Source: 'Culture of Innovation | Nesta', 35.

The reported experiences and opinions can be sorted into emotional aspects and practical aspects. The emotional aspects tended to be more positive among the CGs. For example, 92,1% of CGs answered 'I was totally absorbed' while this opinion was only reflected in 77,2% of the TGs. The cinema audience expressed a stronger sense of being transported to another world and losing track of time (63,2% versus 47,8%) and they also felt a more intimate bond with the performers (70,1% versus 51,7%). The practical aspects were more equivalent, for example, the two groups had more or less the same amount of trouble understanding the plot and both groups felt almost the same need for discussing the experience. But the biggest irregularity is that a striking 96,6% of the CGs considered mediated live to open up for new ways to experience live theatre.⁴⁷ In conclusion, to the

⁴⁷ 'Culture of Innovation | Nesta'. <<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/culture-innovation>> [accessed 23 November 2015], p. 35.

question ‘Has NT Live given audiences new and valued cultural experiences?’ the survey leans towards yes, but has NT Live brought in new socio-demographics to live theatre?

Table 3: Some demographics of National Theatre and NT Live *Phèdre* audiences

	Theatre audience %	Cinema audience %	English population %
Gender			
Male	35.9	27.7	49.1
Female	64.2	72.3	50.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Age			
Less than 25 years	2.4	3.5	31.0
25 – 44 years	21.3	19.5	28.7
45 – 64 years	56.9	51.6	24.3
65 years and more	19.5	25.4	16.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Income per year			
Less than 20,000	21.4	33.2	50.5
20,000 – 49,000	44.1	49.4	41.0
50,000 or more	34.6	17.5	8.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Cultural exposure in the last 12 months			
Little or none	3.1	6.6	(.)
Moderate	44.9	48.9	(.)
Extensive	52.1	44.5	(.)
Total	100.0	100.0	(.)

Source: ‘Culture of Innovation | Nesta’, 33.

The biggest difference between the two audience groups was in terms of income. NT Live attracted more low income takers while the live performance attracted individuals in the higher earning spectra. Therefore, price could most likely be a determinant with cinema tickets selling for £10. Women dominated at both performances while the amount of cultural exposure in the last 12 months did not differ as much as I anticipated between the two audience groups. Those with none, little or moderate exposure dominated in the cinema group while it was the opposite for the TGs. So, to answer the question ‘Did NT Live act as a gateway to new audiences?’, I say the opportunity was offered to all social groups but was mostly taken by regular theatre-goers, and low income earners.⁴⁸

To summarise, the CGs felt a stronger connection to the performers and the events on stage than the TGs. Both groups had a small amount of audience members who did not understand the storyline, both had almost the same need to discuss the show afterwards but

⁴⁸ Culture of Innovation | Nesta. <<http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/culture-innovation>> [accessed 23 November 2015], pp. 32-33.

the CGs felt that mediated live opens up new ways to experience live theatre (96,6%) while only 74,0% of the TGs said the same. 74,0% is still a strong percent, but what I read from this is that experiencing mediated live yourself is what allows you to understand it's potential. Regarding the socio-demographic groups, I see higher attendance of low-earners at the cinema event which might be a result of the lower ticket prices. Women dominated both audiences and the audience members previous exposure to culture differed slightly. Those with extensive cultural exposure chose the theatre version while those with little or none exposure chose the cinema version.

3. Analysis and conclusion

This thesis concerns oppositions and counteracting forces within the mediation of live. The opposition between live and mediated have been investigated above, and naturally, these counteracting forces appear in my conclusion as well. When comparing my own performance analysis of *Hamlet* with the result from Nesta's survey I see some irregularities. In conclusion, the cinema audience tended to be more moved while I, who saw both performances, consider the live event more gripping and engaging. Maybe because I saw it first? Possibly, this is the result of the process leading up to the event. How far have the audience travelled? Was it difficult to get tickets? I myself travelled from Sweden to London and worked very hard to secure tickets making the whole event, subjectively, exclusive.

Mostly, all relies on what you are looking for in a performance. If you are looking for mediated live and you find mediated live, you will most likely be satisfied, but if you are looking for liveness and finds live mediated, you might be dissatisfied. In this concept, if you know and agree with seeing a broadcast and not a live performance, you will most likely be content with this. However, if you are looking for the live experience of *Hamlet* and try to replace it with the cinema version, you might not find your need for liveness answered. Rather, you find something else. To simplify, it comes down to feeling or understanding. Feeling means in this context experiencing Gumbrecht's definition of presence; an impact of the body and senses. Understanding means understanding the plotline and the messages intertwined within. Of course, these senses affect both live and mediated live but there is a slight focus on feeling at the live performance and understanding at the live mediated one. As stated above, this can be applied to the theories of Gumbrecht and Jones. On one side, Gumbrecht claims presence as the key factors in experiencing. This would speak to the advantage of the live performance. On the other hand, the cinema audience has first hand experience as well being at the salon, together, seeing the show for the first time. Myself got a higher sense of presence at Barbican Stage because my physical presence could alter the live

performance, which is not true for a cinema-goer. Me raising a disrupting camera phone to record the performance, coughing or making a scene in one way or another could change the performance progress for me, the rest of the audience as well as for the performers. Jones, on the other hand, sees advantages in not being physically present at the live event. It allows the spectator to see in a slightly more objective way, rewarding understanding more than feeling. The guided gaze, here present in the filming cameras, chooses what is important to see, offering you the 'right' experience. All audience members are therefore offered the exact same version of the play, focusing more on communal understanding than on the subjective spontaneity. Here, we have another contrast. I state live is for feeling and live mediated for understanding, but Nesta's report says the opposite. Why is this?

As much as 92,1% of CGs answered 'I was totally absorbed' while this opinion was only reflected in 77,2% of the TGs. The same was expressed by the CGs sense of being transported to another world and losing track of time (63,2% versus 47,8%) and they also felt a more intimate bond with the performers (70,1% versus 51,7%). This can be contradictory for the reason of pure physical distance between the spectator and the actor. Instead, I think the spectator values curiosities. Snot and sweat are not meaningful for the plot but is one of the visual elements that encourages the feeling of intimacy. Obviously, this closeness leads to omissions of other valuable happenings on the stage, such as scene changes. When Hamlet's fort is suddenly missing from stage after a long close-up, I - and probably other members of the cinema audience - wonder where it went and why? This results in losing both the sense of feeling (the feeling of unity in the stage and production) and the sense of understanding (where did it go and why?) and is therefore one of the clear downsides in the cinematic version.

By comparing my analysis with the results from Nesta's survey I investigate if the audiences experience lacks or improvements when the performance is mediated. This is key in trying to answer the question 'is the need for liveness dying?'. Another indicator is how the initiative affects ticket sales. One could presume that the increasing number of available tickets, due to the cinema version, would lower the interest in live tickets. This has, according to NT Live's head producer and founder David Sabel, not been the case.⁴⁹ In fact, it is the other way around. An accessible event allows for more interest which turns out to sell more tickets. It is not a matter of 225,000 people demanding and needing cinema tickets, instead it is the opportunity to supply these tickets that increases the interest. Instead of local audiences

⁴⁹ TEDx Talks, *Infusing Theatre into Digital Mediums: David Sabel at TEDxBroadway*. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haShNYEKs1c>> [accessed 23 November 2015].

having a demand for tickets, NT Live offers a great supply of tickets the local consumers can not decline.

Other creative mediums have survived and sometimes flourished when they faced development and competition. Painting survived photography and was also freed from the need of depicting which opened up for abstract art. Theatre survived the entry of television and cinema so why should mediatised live be the finishing dagger? All cultural expressions change and develop but in this case, the transfiguration is not so much in the visual appearance but in the accessibility. Auslander is right when he says that live moulded mediatised but I think Sontag was ahead of her time. She proclaims seeing theatre, and what it was developed into, as strictly different media forms and she certainly has a point when it comes to mediatised live. Being a hybrid between the live in live performance, the live in live TV and in the format of cinema it is not trying to replace but to develop. Sabel describes in his TEDxtalk how NT Live is not trying to replace the live theatre - but trying to create a second hand experience generating the same amount, not the same kind, of emotions. With Sontag and Sabel in regard, this is therefore a genre of it's own and I call it mediatised live.

So what does the future look like for live theatre? Since the need for liveness seems not to be dying but developing, mediatised live might just be a first step for a new experience of theatre. Other kinds of performances, such as sport events and popular music concerts, stream their event live on big screens within the arena or stage. This supports the feeling of physical presence, but also seeing the curiosities closeness offer. Maybe NT Live performances will continue to be broadcast at local cinemas around the world but also in the actual theatre salon, creating both closeness and entity? Or perhaps mediatised live will take on a more interactive role in broadcastings, allowing the camera gaze to be controlled by the individual spectator?

Either way, the question of how live and mediatised relate to one or the other is fundamentally a philosophical question. It is the question of what purpose our culture should have. Should it be entertainment and education for the masses or, following genre prejudice, a less accessible media? Here, I would like to finish this thesis subjectively. When it comes to the future of live, not progressing is the same as regressing and progressing is exactly what NT Live is doing. With *Hamlet*, they are not trying to replace, they are trying to create something new. The inhalation at the rise of the curtains at Kino might not be there, but the experience has other qualities. Of course, some physical, visual and auratic elements will change. Barbican Stage will always be bigger than Kino, Claudius background acting might be lost and the sense of presence will be different, but mediatised live can show live performances in ways never seen before.

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5. Appendix:

Email from Barbican Centre regarding *Hamlet* Sky Arts £10 ticket ballot. [recieved 19 June 2015]

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