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Parsifal the game

A journey into the uncharted territory of theatre and games

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Abstract

Theatrical art and games can mutually benefit each other. In a recent project we explored this proposition. On the one hand, we added game elements to a classical opera performance. The resulting 'Parsifal the game' was performed six times for altogether over 400 spectators/players. On the other hand, we investigated how user experiences in simulation games could benefit from an artistic space in which they are played.

We studied how our production encouraged its *plaudience* (a conflation of the words players and audience) to experience and reflect upon themes such as compassion, sustainable societies, competition, and collaboration. From our work we derived lessons about how our blend of theatre and games may evolve into a new genre of interactive storytelling. Mainly, we learned that the performance had transformed from a space for passively digesting a story into a gameful event for active co-creation of embodied experiences and meaning. Artistic concepts and game-elements strengthened each other to create an immersive environment to experience challenges and pitfalls, but also to collaboratively design new futures. We aim to continue our journey and develop a framework for scientific and artistic research to further this new genre.

In our talk we will discuss our expectations when we started our journey, the obstacles and rapids we encountered on our way, the resulting opera-game, and performances. Finally, we discuss future possibilities, challenges and pitfalls in developing this genre.

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