The Future of Theatre in the Face of Digital Technology

By: Rimantas Ribaciauskas Supervisor: Michael Mac an Airchinnigh

Today, when screens, cables and bits are becoming the main technological means of perceiving the world, the risk that there will be soon no place left for theatre - the art of shared space, time and live experience - becomes credible. The question then arises: will theatre be able to deal with these new challenges and how?

In this research paper I will try to answer this question. First, I will look to the history with the aim to explore similar challenges theatre faced from previous technological inventions. Second, I will explore the map of today's theatre, its intersections with digital media and the problems arising from it, namely theatre's move from dramatic to visual language; the attempts to "virtualise" it; the condition of postorganic theatre and the question of the difference between live and mediated performance.

In response to the research question I assert that theatre, although facing strong challenges from digital media, will sustain the main principals of its nature, namely those of participation and real experience. Furthermore, I will argue that it is exactly these principles that will help theatre to secure its audience, regardless of how strong digital influences will become in the future.