

Working Group 1:

## **Who cares for your Art? Communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Friday April 24 - 12:30-14:00

Moderator:

**Esther Charron** – Québec – Pôles Magnétiques [www.moismulti.org](http://www.moismulti.org)

Speakers :

**Dušan Barok** – Bratislava, Berlin – Multiplace network culture festival – [www.multiplace.org](http://www.multiplace.org)

**Joao Costa** – Porto – artist, scientist - <http://joaommcosta.blog.com/>

**Isabel Ferreira** – Rio de Janeiro – [www.south-south.info](http://www.south-south.info) Dance project [www.movimiento.org](http://www.movimiento.org),  
Red Sudamericana de Danza's website coordinator

**Emile Morin** – Québec – artistic director - Productions Recto-Verso, Mois Multi  
[www.meduse.org/recto-verso/](http://www.meduse.org/recto-verso/)

This working group focused on the use of new communication channels (specifically Internet related) in the development and promotion of performing arts. „Things are changing at the speed of light“ opened moderator Esther Charron. „But where exactly is it leading us?“

There is no use in including here an address on our changed methods of communication, correspondence, and spread of information, or the importance of keeping up with and adapting to these processes- we all know this and have known it for years, as post offices have been decreasing in numbers, and people no longer ask for telephone numbers, but Myspace profile names.

The question is, how can we best use these new modes and technologies to our benefit, as artists, as promoters, as programmers; as the creators and networkers of art which all of us inevitably are?

The topic proposed in this session was actually two fold; how to use new communication and information sharing technologies to promote and raise awareness about your work, and also, how such technologies can be used in the creation of the art itself, and specifically with creating a new relationship with the audience.

### Online networking and promotion: love your online self

In the first twenty minutes of the meeting, all eyes were turned anxiously to the young employees of the Slovak National Theater, who were struggling (first with problems accessing the internet, and then with an empty laptop battery), to provide the panelists with their discussion materials, which were all, of course, to be found online. "I am completely lost without the internet to talk about my work" admitted panelist Isabel Ferreira, from Rio de Janeiro, the coordinator of [www.south-south.info](http://www.south-south.info) and [www.movimiento.org](http://www.movimiento.org), two very successful networks created to stimulate and facilitate international exchange, cooperation and circulation of art and ideas in South America. At this point, the irony of the situation became obvious, and I couldn't help but have the fatalistic thought that if things are moving at the speed of light, and we are all rapidly adapting ourselves to catch up, what would happen if it were to be taken away? Without the internet where would we be?

But fortunately, the problem was remedied, and Ms Ferreira went on with her presentation, online weaponry in hand. "A website is more than a business card, it is a collaborative creation, where you can simultaneously share with all the members of the network.", she said. The success and popularity of networks such as the ones Ms. Ferreira coordinates depend on people's eagerness to create an online identity, and the amount of importance such profiles are given. The concept of

these networks is that artists or organisations can set up and manage their own webpages under the larger network umbrella, where they are able to post photos, video, and even their own blog which follows their creative process.

The two networks represented by Ms. Ferreira are just a small example of thousands of such sites in place, to help people more easily reach each other in a globalised world. Most of us are familiar by now with social networking sites like Myspace and Facebook, which have become the addictions of a younger generation (indeed, today teenagers spend more time online than watching TV), but many overlook their potential as useful tools of promotion- especially in reaching out to the younger audience who accepts these their main form of communication.

“The internet is more than a source of information; it is a meeting point, which is very important for remote places with not much money.” said Ms. Ferreira. This statement was echoed by fellow panelist Emil Morin, Artistic Director of Productions Recto-Verso/Mois Multi [www.meduse.org/recto-verso/](http://www.meduse.org/recto-verso/), who runs a multidisciplinary art space in Québec, which houses up to 10 disconnected artistic groups ??? and projects under one roof at the same time. And how does he find cutting edge work to present in his space? Through the internet, of course. Most of his international artists are found online, through the magic of live streaming video. ???

It has become a reality that something (or someone) doesn't really exist until it is Googleable. And for some, Googleability has become of premiere importance in the booking and promotion of performance works. It is obvious in cases such as Ms. Ferreira's network, or even our beloved IETM, the usefulness of online networking for professional purposes. But even social networks such as Facebook have validity in this market. Such sites are often looked down upon because of their immediate association with vapid teenage gossip and party photos, but the wide-reaching spread of their influence cannot be denied. I myself recently experienced this, when I realised that creating a facebook event for an upcoming performance was a more successful tool in accumulating audience than any amount of flyers, or even personal emails. And for this reason, such tools should not be overlooked, and one's online persona must not be carelessly managed. "Morality should be in the church, not in the arts," said Hege Paalsrud, of Danse-og teatersentrum/The Norwegian Association for Performing Arts. "A lot happens through that network- you can't judge Facebook!" We are now Facebook friends.

Dusan Barok from Multiplace network cultural festival <http://multiplace.org/blog/> also celebrates the internet as a useful tool in expanding audience relationships. "The visibility is higher on online social networks." He said. Because such online resources are becoming evermore valid means of discovering and pursuing new work, we must all learn to embrace our online profiles, and maintain them with the attention that they deserve as legitimate identities.

#### Online development and creation: the global collaborative factor

The exploration of Internet technologies is not limited to its evident usefulness as a networking tool, as things such as online blogs and realtime video conferencing, or sharing of works in progress, are more and more being used to aid in the creation of performance works, opening the creative process up to a worldwide network of virtual collaborators. Many young companies now have online blogs where they post videos of the rehearsal process daily, and invite online viewers to share their feedback and recommendations as the piece develops. “It is really valuable to get feedback as you are in process through a blog” said Joao Costa, one of the panelists, and a choreographer who collaborates with programmers in the development and use of software which uses realtime composition to create compositions in video and dance (<http://joaommcosta.blog.com/>). Mr. Costa claims that this avenue of communication is invaluable, because you not only receive helpful feedback from a worldwide network of artists and audience, but that it is also an easy way to reach people who would have never had access to the work otherwise. Ms. Ferreira agreed that sharing the creative process in such a way is invaluable, not only in raising awareness about one's work, but also in broadening your stream of influence, claiming that such open rehearsal blog networks create “a collective intelligence”- a worldwide

pool of collaborators, which can together create a more multifaceted and integrated work of art.

This process also aids, of course, in increasing audience numbers for live events. "The audience has a stronger connection if they feel that they have contributed to a piece." said Mr. Barok. He also quoted the worldwide realtime broadcast of a performance from the Metropolitan Opera in cinemas as an example of how the internet ??? can be used to reach a greater audience that would not otherwise have the chance to experience such a performance. "But are we losing audience through this new technology?" questioned moderator Esther Charron. Through a discussion which ensued with various attendees, the answer was deemed to be no. The way to reach a younger audience is through the tools which they are accustomed to, and seeing a performance online is a valid experience in itself, as people's relationships to live events are changing. People (especially young people) now surf the web not vacantly, but because they have an emotional connection to what they are exploring. Even if they can access something online, they still want to see it live. In this way, we are increasing not only our collaborative pool, but creating an automatic group of engaged and interested audience members.

In the end, it was agreed (or perhaps reinforced) that the Internet has become an invaluable tool for the development and promotion of artistic works. We, as artists, as networkers, as promoters, as programmers, as friends, must keep running alongside the speeding bullet that is Internet technology, and continue to explore its ever increasing capabilities.

**Report by:**

Brina Stinehelfer [www.per-aspera.net](http://www.per-aspera.net)