

Performing Robots Conference: Dialogues Between Theatre and Robotics

23-25 May 2019, Utrecht (the Netherlands)

Organized by Transmission in Motion (Utrecht University) and SPRING Performing Arts Festival

Call for Proposals

Deadline for Proposals: 7 March 2019

Robots are increasingly present, both in our daily life and on stage. Theatre makers explore the possibilities of these new technological performers and investigate the opportunities and implications of a future of living with them. Also in daily life, the presence and behavior of robots raises questions that concern their dramaturgy and design: how do social robots address their human co-performers and afford interaction with them? What scripts do they follow? How to design and choreograph their appearance and movements? How do their actions invite responses and exclude others? How do they draw and sustain attention? How do they invite us to attribute character and meaning? What role do affect and persuasiveness play for a successful interaction?

Guy Hoffman observes that theater acting and other performing arts could serve Human Robot Interaction (HRI) as useful testbeds. Heather Knight identifies eight lessons about designing non-verbal interaction that can be learned from the theatre, and demonstrates the potential of comedy for experimenting with and testing out robot behavior and HRI. Elizabeth Jochum points to puppet theatre as source of knowledge and expertise about animating mechanical agents, and shows how theatre can be used to study interaction with care robots. Projects like Towards Corporeally Literate Social Robots (Petra Gemeinboeck) and the Pinoke Project (Deakin University) use expertise from the field of dance and interaction with dancers for new approaches to developing movement for robots.

This conference takes stock of interactions between theatre and robotics so far and looks at possibilities for future collaboration. What do the performing arts have to offer as inspiration, model, and testbeds for robots and for HRI? What does robotics have to offer to the theatre? How might collaboration between the performing arts and robotics contribute to further development of social robots, as well as to critical understanding of what it will mean to be living with them?

The conference will include performances by and/or dialogues with theatre makers Kris Verdonck, Rimini Protokoll, Dries Verhoeven, Angela Goh and others.

We are welcoming proposals for papers, demonstrations and other kinds of presentations by scholars and artists about interactions between theatre and robotics. Subjects may include, but are not limited to:

- The use of knowledge and expertise (theories, analytical tools, practical expertise) from the theatre for understanding and designing robot behavior and HRI.
- Practices of making theatre as inspiration for creative approaches to the process of developing robot behavior and HRI.
- The use of the theatre, and by extension theatrical contexts like festivals, as a site for experimentation with the behavior of robots, for trying out and testing ways of communicating with them, as well as for exploring scenarios for interacting and living with robots.
- Creative explorations of robotics by theatre and dance makers.

Proposals for papers should be 250 words in length, in addition to the following information: name of presenter(s), email address, short bio (maximum 50 words). Send proposals to TIM@uu.nl, indicating “paper proposal” in the subject line.

For other formats, please contact the organizers (TIM@uu.nl) with a short description of what this presentation would entail and what would be required, as well as a short (50 words) bio.

Important dates:

Deadline for submissions: 7 March 2019

Notification of acceptance: 20 March 2019

Dates of the conference: 23-25 May 2019



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