

# Green: Exploring the aestheticized use of chroma-key techniques and technologies in two intermedial productions

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## Abstract

Peggy Shaw's *RUFF*, (USA 2013) and Queensland Theatre Company's collaboration with Queensland University of Technology, *Total Dik!*, (Australia 2013) overtly and evocatively draw on an aestheticized use of the cinematic techniques and technologies of Chroma Key to reveal the tensions in their production and add layers to their performances. In doing so they offer invaluable insight where the filmic and theatrical approaches overlap. This paper draws on Eckersall, Grehan and Scheer's *New Media Dramaturgy* (2014) to reposition the frame as a contribution to intermedial theatre and performance practices in light of increasing convergence between seemingly disparate discourses.

In *RUFF*, the scenic environment replicates a chroma-key 'studio' which facilitates the reconstruction of memory displaced after a stroke. *RUFF* uses the screen and projections to recall crooners, lounge singers, movie stars, rock and roll bands, and an eclectic line of eccentric family members living inside Shaw. While the show pays tribute to those who have kept her company across decades of theatrical performance, use of non-composited chroma-key technique as a theatrical device and the work's taciturn revelation of the production process during performance, play a central role in its exploration of the juxtaposition between its reconstructed form and content.

In contrast *Total Dik!* uses real-time green screen compositing during performance as a scenic device. Actors manipulate scale models, refocus cameras and generate scenes within scenes in the construction of the work's examination of an isolated Dictator. The 'studio' is again replicated as a site for (re)construction, only in this case *Total Dik!* actively seeks to reveal the process of production as the performance plays out. Building on *RUFF*, and other works such as *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark*, (2012) and Hotel Modern's *God's Beard* (2012), this work blends a convergence of mobile technologies, models, and green screen capture to explore aspects of transmedia storytelling in a theatrical environment (Jenkins, 2009, 2013).

When a green screen is placed on stage, it reads at once as metaphor and challenge to the language of theatre. It becomes, or rather acts, as a 'sign' that alludes to the nature of the reconstructed, recomposited, manipulated and controlled. In *RUFF* and in *Total Dik!*, it is also a place where as a mode of production and subsequent reveal, it adds weight to performance. These works are informed by Auslander (1999) and Giesenkam (2007) and speak to and echo Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006). This paper's consideration of the integration of studio technique and live performance as a dynamic approach to multi-layered theatrical production develops our understanding of their combinatory use in a live performance environment.

## Introduction

This discussion focuses on the place and function of the cinematic 'green screen' as material scenic device and meaning-making tool that contributes to developing our understanding of 21<sup>st</sup> century performance. To better frame this we draw from texts such as Philip Auslander's *Liveness* (1999), Hans Thies Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) and Greg Gieseckam's *Staging the Screen* (2007). This paper also draws on Eckersall, Grehan and Scheer's theory of New Media Dramaturgy (NMD), where the aspects of new media represents a shift toward intermediality and the intrinsic dialectical relationships between performance and installation art that are captured in live and virtual performances (Eckersall et al., 2014). As an emerging theoretical discourse NMD enables the establishment of links between new media innovations in dramaturgy and the theories and practices of media and visual arts that underpin a growing body of work in the field. In questioning and drawing on methods such as destabilisation, colonisation and informational economy, which are underpinned by affective and ethical understandings of communication (Eckersall et al., 2014), NMD contextualises the leveraging of cinematic devices on stage. This allows determination of expectation around the contribution they make to our understanding of new media's augmentation of the language of dramaturgy.

To examine narrative connections between the filmic tradition and the conventions established in the postdramatic – as an aesthetic logic of new theatre blurring the boundaries between performer and audience (Lehmann, 2006) – we consider two works, *RUFF* (2013) and *Total Dik!* (2013). We do so in order to focus on how each work establishes its 'frame' through use of the physical structure of an installed green screen. These productions exploit the palimpsestuousness of the green screen on stage and in doing so, illustrate the emergence of a dynamic form of performance that moves beyond Lehmann's *Postdramatic Theatre* (2006) that is partially captured in NMD, which, we suggest, largely remains as yet appropriately 'unframed'.

*RUFF* is a solo-performed theatre work, born out of Peggy Shaw's collaboration with Lois Weaver. It premiered at the PS122 COIL Festival in New York in January 2013. *Total Dik!* is a collaboration between Queensland Theatre Company (QTC) and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) first performed as part of the Greenhouse program in the Bille Brown Studio in Brisbane, Australia in April 2013. The first is an autobiographical work by one of the world's leading queer feminist performance artists and the second is an all male collaboration on the nature of dictatorship. We acknowledge that the content and modes of production of the works could not, in terms of subject matter or methodology, be further apart. However, their deployment of the filmic language and technique of Chroma Key compositing in their respective scenographies – particularly the replication of a 'studio' green screen environment as a material scenic device – links the works and contributes to the use of filmic discourse in the theatre. The productions use the green screen for live compositing and/or as a framed blank canvas that 'waits' for content to appear. When this 'adding' occurs in film, the green

screen environment is most often invisible. The completed backgrounds (constructed well in advance of the shoot) are added post performance, around the actors in the frame. When a green screen is placed on stage, it reads at once as metaphor and challenge to the language of theatre. It becomes, or rather acts, as a 'sign' that alludes to the nature of the reconstructed, recomposited, manipulated and controlled. In *RUFF* and *Total Dik!*, the green canvas becomes a place for memories to be reconstructed, for messages to be manipulated and for modes of production to be revealed.

### **Examining the Works**

*RUFF* is Peggy Shaw's most recent work in a long series of solo performances. Co-written with partner Lois Weaver, it is an emotive and humorous musical perspective on mortality, gender and bravado. Peggy had a stroke in January 2011. In its wake, she realised her influences have been with her whenever she performs. These influences include a long list of crooners, lounge singers, movie stars, rock and roll bands, as well as a host of eccentric family members. The work is a tribute to those who have kept her company, a lament for the absence of those she's lost and an examination of the holes left in her mind by the stroke. It simultaneously celebrates new insights she and those around her gained in the process, placing Shaw centre-stage throughout. The narrative is constructed so the green screen surrounding the artist cleverly fills blanks in the story of her survival. Projected memories, a prerecorded swing band fronted by Shaw and motion captured movement of her dancing with the Moon are interwoven with a diverse range of anecdotes, songs, images, and confessions.



Figure 1. Peggy Shaw taking the lead (Image Michael Conti, 2013)

As illustrated in Figure 1, *Peggy Shaw takes the lead* (Conti, 2013), the immersive use of Chroma Key in *RUFF* creates the site for projected films of memory. It functions as a scenic device and as a background for storytelling where the actor becomes the performative conduit between audience and screen. Importantly, in *RUFF* the green screen is never actually used for live compositing – it is a signpost. It alerts the audience that recall and composition occur as the story takes shape and that the composite of memory is the theatrical device enabling the work to occur. The scenic environment is built around a replication of the ‘studio’ where the misplaced memory is reconstructed almost despite the stroke. While the green screen is clearly integral to the performance, this work has been developed in conventional theatrical terms. A script was produced, the actor and scenes rehearsed and the director guided the project as a holistic process in accordance in the main with traditional principles – connecting the creative dots in what could be seen as a ‘linear’ fashion.

The same cannot be said of *Total Dik!*. Conceived in an office at QUT, it was written ‘postdramatically’, where its pieces, scenes and narrative were shaped cohesively in a very short, intensive studio-based, time frame. This took place in the same performance space where the work was first developed and presented to the public. Created by an ensemble of interdisciplinary theatre-makers at various stages of their respective careers along with an experienced writer, completely new to theatre, *Total Dik!* is an experimental work designed to explore and investigate the use of new media, ‘digital liveness’ and intermediality in live performance. Influenced and informed by works such as *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (2012) by Lynn Nottage and Hotel Modern’s works, *Kamp* (2005) and *God’s Beard* (2012), it sought to build on innovative production processes developed in Chris Kohn’s *The House of Dreaming* (2012). It also builds upon the production techniques and design Delbridge brought to his work for Split Britches on *Lost Lounge* (2011/12) and, most significantly for *RUFF* (2013).

Set on an offshore platform run by a dictator whose connection with reality becomes increasingly detached, the work juxtaposes film studio techniques with live performance. It blends a convergence of ‘to hand’ technologies: pre-recorded film, scale models, and Chroma Key compositing in a single multi-layered narrative. The actors engage with the green screen, smart phones, and tablets, providing voice-overs for projections of found materials. The eclectic script is interwoven with footage and excerpts created by or strongly associated with a diverse range of notorious dictators and enigmatic leaders such as Kim Jong Il, Idi Amin and Jim Jones. In capturing and shaping a blend of theatre, TV studio broadcast (as part of the play), animation and experimental play writing, it enables disparate creative processes to be brought into alignment. This approach to performance enables an interrogation of such themes as media and communication, manipulation of ‘the message’ (McLuhan, 1962), dictatorship, and, most particularly, the moment of transition from followed figurehead to fascism.

The work has generated a living, new media rich, play text/script that leverages the strengths of storytelling techniques that draw upon theories

emerging in the convergent uses of text and technology. Along with the productions noted earlier, there are further influences from creative technologist James Bridle, ground-breaking ARG performance collective, Blast Theory and digital writers and artists such as Jason Nelson, Kate Pullinger and Naomi Alderman.

If we are able to describe the development of *RUFF* as a linear model of development which incorporates Chroma Key as a scenographic device that reads as memory recall and note that *Total Dik!* takes on the green screen as a point to grow from, the works' most significant overlap is in their use of theatricalised 'framing' for the audience. We use Postlewait and Davis' definition here, where theatricality is 'a sign empty of all meaning, but the meaning of all signs' (2003: 1). Through this assertion, we suggest that the signposting provided by Chroma Key (on both stages) is central to how the plays are read and framed for the audience.

### **NMD and The Frame**

Eckersall, Grehan and Scheer highlight New Media Dramaturgy's ability to dramatically change the audience experience and note that production and reception can now be radically different (2014). Timespans can be merged, fractured and managed in new and innovative ways; the physical and the virtual can be negotiated in one location; and performers can be phantasmagorically transformed – simultaneously present and absent, live and mediated. Additionally, objects, as well as subjects, such as stories, bodies and screens, can be remediated, manipulated and recomposited; landscape changes soundscapes and machines, models and tools can be revealed and operated, actioned and constructed within the performance. Audience response, as it must, changes accordingly.

This approach to theatre making refocuses and assists with negotiation of the problem that, particularly for makers, the most intensely embodied experiences can be effectively conveyed through virtual media. Media-driven theatre arguably provides an opening for the audience to more fully experience an event. In describing 'mutual intensification' as 'performative media', Scheer refers to gestures, acts and behaviours that have significant or symbolic meaning irrespective of their mode of production or reception (2011). As a way to analyse performative media, NMD therefore begins with the understanding that the point of collision between the body and technology in the performative serves to amplify – not detract from – the affective experience. It is less concerned with the status of the live in performance or the virtualisation of the theatrical. Where the interaction between the live or the physical and mediated or virtual re-intensifies the experience in both, it positions the transformational, interstitial and translational practices in dramaturgy as connective tissue between 'ideas and their compositional and embodied enactment' (Eckersall et al., 2014). While contemporary notions of performance could be seen to superficially situate new media as a means of aesthetic innovation, in accordance with NMD, we prefer to see it as the nexus between context, content, form and audience, or as Shikata Yukiko sees it, performance space as an 'image machine' (see Hatanaka et al.,

2002).

In 1870 Steele MacKaye embarked on a series of technical innovations that changed production in theatre. As noted by Auslander (1999: 11), MacKaye's proscenium adjuster, as an example, anticipates and essentially pre-dates cinematic techniques by decades. Auslander goes on to underline how narrative structures and visual devices common to cinematic production, such as the close-up, the fade in and out and parallel editing were used on stage well in advance of becoming foundational narratorial elements in film (1999: 13). As we can now see, in NMD (Eckersall, et al.), MacKaye's challenge to the proscenium highlights a vital and relevant aspect of Lehmann's challenge to the dramatic. Most significantly for our discussion here, it is the frame as a theatrical and cinematic device that impacts and is most impacted upon by the introduction of Chroma Key compositing, a technique that owes its origins entirely to cinematic discourse. It is through this 'frame' that *RUFF* and *Total Dik!* explore their themes, content and aspects of performance.

Conventional understanding of the relationship between perspective and the constructed frame begins in the Renaissance with the arrival of *single point perspective* and its exemplification in painted works such as Da Vinci's *Journey of the Magi* (n.d.). In theatre, this genealogy begins with the addition of the *proskene* to the ancient greek stage; is challenged with the use of pageant carts in middle ages in Europe; is exploited through the four pillars of the Noh pavilion in Japan; is broken with the forced and ultimately flawed single perspective of Scamozzi's installed street scape in the *Teatro Olimpico* (1579); and finally, is arguably perfected with Wagner's development of the double proscenium at Bayreuth to embellish the size and force of his Germanic Demi-gods in *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1848-1874). From this rich heritage, the frame and the concept of framing achieves increasing sophistication through filmic discourse and technological innovation, functioning as the primary tool for the manipulation of story and narrative. The 180-degree frame, which film initially borrowed from theatre, has moved rapidly to mediation. Parts of the body are shown and disclosures and their combinations are revealed in edited sequences. Where theatre uses the frame to represent a fictitious present, film is able to show a *now* from another time, a recorded *now*. The film's frame is a two dimensional planar capturing image and the postdramatic extends the frame to the open stage where it can present and capture an unmediated 'now'. Subsequent reformation and even the removal of the proscenium arch has revolutionised theatrical presentation and audience perceptions, as well as irrevocably affecting behaviour either side of the frame. The revitalised stage of the postdramatic (and the theatre forms that inevitably follow) can be directly credited to the rich heritage of framing in the theatre and the ongoing exploitation of framing devices in film. This history and these ongoing practices facilitate ground-breaking experimentation in the theatre; experimentation we tend to see and accept as normalised trope. In the case of the works discussed here, which see disparate techniques plaited together, the emergence of new interdisciplinary and/or hybrid forms of performance are intimately linked to this shared history that cinema and the stage interrogate through the frame in all of its permutations.

## Application

During a concert in 1967, The Doors placed a television on stage and used it to watch a screened 'live' recording of one of their own performances. They stopped mid-song, increased the volume on the TV and sat down with their backs to an audience who watched them while they watched themselves. Auslander uses this anecdote to highlight what he describes as 'harbingers' (1999: 10). He points to the presence of the live and the recorded on stage during a performance and perhaps more significantly, underlines the prioritisation of the mediated over the live, in the case of Jim Morrison and his colleagues, for the performers as much as the audience (Auslander, 1999)

*RUFF* presents a projected band who play recorded but 'live' 'onstage' behind Peggy Shaw while her voice replaces Leonard Cohen's on the song, *I'm Your Man* (1988). Shaw's presence in the lead singer's role, aside from her extraordinary charisma as a performer, becomes the energetic centre of the event, a focal point for audience engagement, giving evocative largesse and poignancy. Disarmingly, the revelation of the delivery process in the showing, as well as the placement of three television-sized tele-prompters, only serves to augment the performer and the performed. The creators and performers of *Total Dik!* make use of Chroma Key in this way too. While the works are distinctly different in terms of their content, there are number of such similarities – but let us focus on the frame before we look at other aspects.

In *RUFF* the frame is presented as a site for the reproduction of memory. The work deploys the 180-degree frame but it does not rely on a complete window frame treatment engendered by a proscenium. Rather it places the audience in a planar relationship to the performance and scenic design. The green screen environment is therefore 'seen' to generate frame and perspective, where the live and the recorded provoke a renewed 'liveness'. As illustrated in Figure 2, where Shaw performs with the RUFF band (Conti, 2013), Shaw is 'framed' within the confines of a strip of Chroma Key paper that provides backdrop and floor. She responds to the mediated background and stays within this coloured boundary, which invokes the framing device. Shaw also responds to and works with slides presented on tele-prompters in full view of the audience. The slides prompt the actor as she negotiates the work, her performance and her diminished personal capacity as a result of the stroke. This relationship between form and content is most acutely felt in how the performance is framed. Rather than diminish the performance, there is emotive power where the revelation of the processes of production are physically and symbolically realised.



Figure 2: Shaw performing 'with' the RUFF band (Image Michael Conti, 2013)

The green canvas suggests that composition is ongoing, even self-initiated, and the reconstruction takes place as the work 'happens'. The mediated is given precedence over the live, even when this is clearly not the case. Shaw's performance preserves the 'liveness' of the band, despite the moment of performance being accompanied by a cued video file controlled by software and the touch of a button. The green screen contributes to, and indeed enhances, this illusion, as it acts as the framing device that places the live and the pre-recorded 'into' the performance space for audience response. Thus it enables the memory recalled and performed to exist within a single frame.





Figure 3: The model from *Total Dik!* (Image Delbridge & McGowan 2013)

In *Total Dik!*, the green screen, as a scenic device, allows compositing to be undertaken in real time in front of an audience. Actors manipulate scale models, refocus cameras and generate scenes. Figure 3, The model from *Total Dik!* (Delbridge & McGowan, 2013) highlights this model, which is constructed as part of the work's opening sequence and positioned against the Chroma Key so that its backdrop can be 'added in' during production. The film camera (left in the picture) becomes a tool for and within the performance as the full effect of the model and green screen is projected onto the opposite wall of the 'stage' (see figures 5 and 6).

As the work seeks to reveal the process of production to the audience, the 'studio' is replicated as a site for reconstruction. This relationship of content to form highlights the 'making' of the dictator in terms of performance and production and, as with *RUFF*, reinforces the potential of the emotive power that can be utilised in the revelation of process. The strong interaction between the performer and the various media, images, voice-overs and videos reshape our notions of the broken leader turned dictator as fictitious character performed. In one scene the dictator holds an iPad in front of his face. It plays a pre-recorded, (menacingly-edited) fractured monologue. The embedded projection subverts and challenges audience reception of the dictator's message, highlighting the distortion and underlying dichotomy between the constructed or the intended, and the reality or audience interpretation. While this echoes Lehmann's postdramatic, we argue for its signaling of what may come beyond such notions of the 'open' stage – the possibility of what it might offer to us as theatre-makers and its suggestion of a new art genre. Additionally, the re-presentation of filmed sequences on a range of screens underlines issues around the framing of elements and objects within the production's larger frame, i.e. the frames within the frame.

However, it also marks, if not distinguishes, the increased blurring of borders and the respective disputes between film and theatre and their cultural guardians.

It is worth noting here that this approach is illustrated in the construction of a digitally fluid *Total Dik!* script. Through its incorporation of the multimedia elements of physical make-up, the play script becomes a creative artefact outside of its theatrical production. One that speaks to the drillable and spreadable storytelling techniques as identified by Henry Jenkins (2007, 2012, 2013), Christy Dena (2010, 2012) and Andrea Philips (2012). This is a technique replete with the obligatory 'rabbit holes' for readers to get lost down and 'easter eggs' that reward the pursuit of seemingly unrelated storylines. The work uses hyperlinks, images, videos and audio material, which will in turn inform the theatrical development of its production. As an exploratory work that juxtaposes transmedia storytelling techniques with live performance, *Total Dik!* draws upon Samuel Becket's challenges to theatre orthodoxy and touches upon Brechtian notions of alienation through 'sleight-of-hand' or processual unpacking and deconstruction during performance.



Figure 4: Total Dik! Scenic Environment as Threshold (Image Shari Irwin, 2013)

Figure 4, Total Dik Scenic Environment as Threshold (Shari Irwin, 2013) illustrates how the Chroma Key is used as a performative frame in *Total Dik!*. The screen is deployed as the divisional strip between the seating of a traverse stage and challenges traditions of dramatic theatre and film. Placed either side of the stage or set, the audience is halved, finding themselves operating on either side of a threshold, with the green screen running across the floor and up to walls between them as a liminal area (Turner, 1982). Between their response and reception, this is a space where the meaning of

the work challenges and is challenged. This is heightened further when the seemingly formal narrative structure is intermittently ruptured by the performers, who seek audience participation and the revelation of overt 'theatricalisation' of cinematic production processes such as the 'real-time' construction of the scale model, live compositing and voice overs. Brewster and Jacobs assert that early cinema overtly sought to be more theatrical (1997: 214), while in *Total Dik!* theatre strives for elements of the cinematic. It breaks down modes of production for film (on stage), placing the audience within the performative frame, yet its meaning making is inherently tied to a theatrical reception. Following Lehman's 'new theatre' text, it seeks to reflect on and question the idea of constitution as a construct, moving it outside of any consideration of it as a dramatic text (2006: 2). Its departure point is postdramatic by nature, but the production of *Total Dik!*, and *RUFF*, arguably, push beyond Lehmann's 'boundaries', particularly where their mode(s) of production expose, or reveal, meaning in the works. This allows a greater alignment with filmic techniques in relation to the established dominance of postdramatic trends on the stage.

As Mulvey notes in the closing stages of *Death 24 x a second*, recorded film worlds can now be brought to a halt, slowed and or broken into pieces (2006: 181). The delay of forward movement in the medium and the fragmentation or ruptures in the narrative take the audience back to what's behind them – a long history where these two forms, despite the interwoven nature of their relationship still appear to repel one another (Auslander, 1999; Vardac, 1949; Gieseckam, 2007). We have come to accept the disruption and delay as part of our normal consumption of film influences, bringing those 'reading patterns and acceptances to the ways in which we read performance can be problematic despite deploying similar (and now familiar) techniques. In *Total Dik!* we are transported from traditional narrative, to manipulated model puppetry, to historical recordings from fascist regimes and back to reframed speeches from Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple. In many ways the use of filmic techniques on the stage not only pragmatically facilitate these segues, but help us to absorb them as natural shifts, in so much as the 'shifting' itself becomes an essential aspect of the post-postdramatic nature of the theatrical experience.

If we consider Gieseckam's positioning of Svoboda as an exemplar of a practitioner who used the available technology to enhance central storytelling (2007: 53), it would follow that use of a green screen would operate in the same way. However, we found the introduction of the Chroma Key substantially modifies the ways in which a work can be seen, usurping the context for the functions of conventional media and thereby challenging the audience's view. In the next section we consider and summarise our observations and analysis of the use and impact of the incorporation of the green screen as a frame.

Figure 5, Scenic Design Sketch *Total Dik!* (Delbridge, 2013) illustrates the original technical production design and more clearly highlights the notion of studio replication, the placement of the model (pictured in Figure 4) and the Chroma Key's placement as material scenic device and its use for projection.

Its design and construction were key to the development of the written and performed elements which occurred around it, as opposed to the much more linear development of *RUFF*. It opens with a few seconds lifted from a Hitler speech, which is then projected onto the Chroma Key on the opposite wall. The looped footage is contrasted as the projected view gradually reveals a lush orange Queensland sunset as backdrop. The television camera pulls back further, gradually revealing that the footage is being played on an iPhone sitting on a to-scale, hand-made model of the platform. This sequence, leading to the introduction of the actor, subverts each aspect individually, reconciling their quite startling differences. This occurs while capturing the process and multilayered imagery in one frame: a frame that disrupts and challenges audience perceptions on the production process.

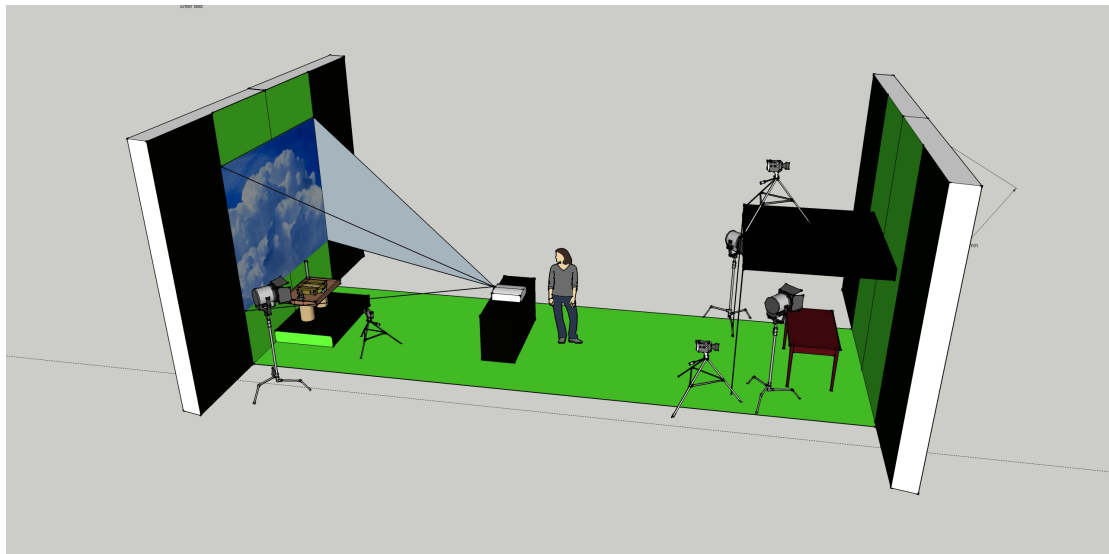


Figure 5: Scenic Design Sketch *Total Dik!* (Image Delbridge, 2013)

Figure 6, Scenic Design Sketch *RUFF* (Delbridge, 2013) captures the scenographic design for Peggy Shaw's work. The green screen runs across the floor and the wall immediately behind Peggy. The Teleprompters face Peggy from the other three sides and can be read depending on the angle by the audience. Large remote controlled fish, which enter during the final scenes where Peggy discusses the importance of living by a river, are disproportionately represented here in terms of the drawing's scale, but more symbolically represent their surreal appearance in the production.

Despite their aesthetic differences, comparison of these scenographic environments further highlights the similarities and divergences in the works at the heart of this discussion. They are presented here to underline what we see as key findings in leveraging the use off Chroma Key, image and film and actor interaction with the technologies in live performance. These performances were chosen for discussion because they gather and embrace meaning from their being 'created' or 'constructed' in front of their audience. This is underpinned by Auslander's view that the live performance has become a way in which mediated representations can most readily be naturalised. Auslander could be seen to suggest that the convergence of the virtual in the physical gains its appeal through our, as audience and creators,

inferred nostalgia and assumed immediacy. The recreation of an image or, in these works, moments in the live theatrical environment, almost forces the audience to imagine they are, or at least have been 'real' at some stage (1999: 43).

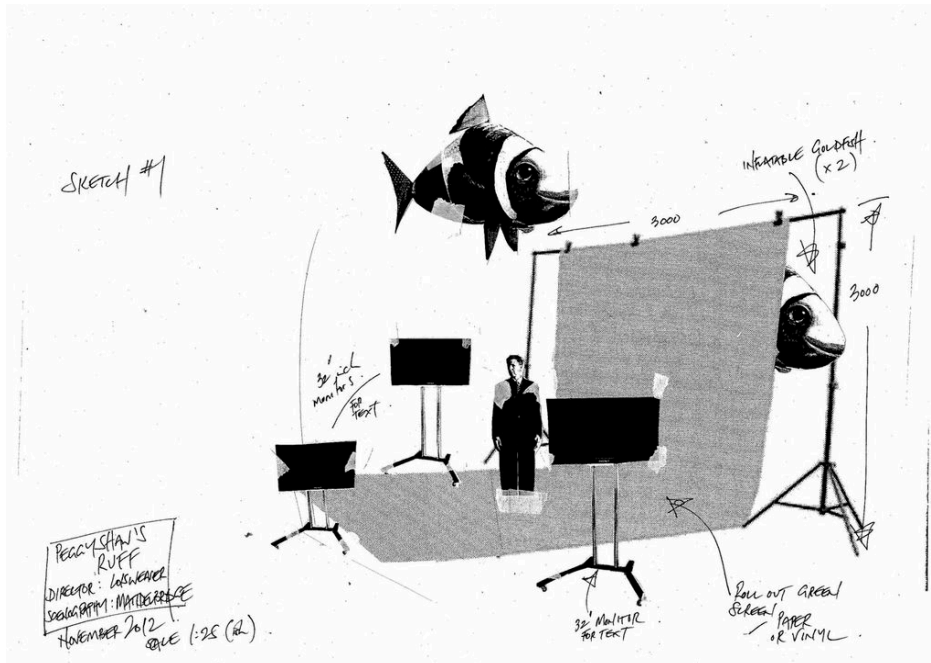


Figure 6: Scenic Design Sketch RUFF (Image Delbridge, 2013)

It is perhaps significant that Gieseckam notes Susan Sontag's 1966 observation that the distinction between cinematic and theatrical forms is in their treatment of space (2007: 7). It is only after significantly drawing on Sontag's notion for an understanding of our own practice that we see such strident similarities occurring across the works. However, it is not just in their treatment of space. The green screen allows a much greater manipulation of, what would otherwise be a, limited space. As a material scenic device, it can, equally and simultaneously, reflect and facilitate deeper levels of interaction and engagement. This is of course, measured in each works' framing of its content. For without a clear understanding of the framing, the strengths in its use, and in what it reveals would not be so easily recognised.

Gieseckam's assertion that introducing cinematic technique to the stage is essentially a combination of the scenographic and narrative functions with a subjective insert is tested here too (2007: 61). As demonstrated in *RUFF* and *Total Dik!* Chroma Key enables more than a 'subjective insert'. Alongside these broader characteristics and implications, Chroma Key can become a malleable and powerful tool in the enhancement of central storytelling. It allows much greater affect in the handling of time on stage, can provide more invaluable insight into individual aspects of the performance, facilitates extension of the theatrical space and eases location of the action. This suggests a much broader range of interpretive approaches than simple

backdrop configuration. In this sense, we assert that this offers the ability to move the work beyond the open staged view and understanding that the postdramatic offers.

Both works also bring storytelling techniques more commonly associated with digital platforms into the theatre-making space. The juxtaposition of film studio techniques within live performance and their incorporation of traditional and new media technologies, see the works test practices of production and performance on the stage. In terms of scenic language, the use of pre-existing film sequences and easily recalled images, which can be autonomous while supportive from the central stage fiction, can better enrich and/or perturb the actors' performance. We see this clearly in *RUFF* where Peggy Shaw slips in and out of the conventional and the postdramatic in a hybrid method that is further complicated or arguably substantiated by the (re-)construction of the frame. Chroma Key is used in these works as a performative element as well as being used to introduce dynamic dramatic irony between the performer and their surrounds. This includes an affect and/or change within the stage set, the performance, or even within the performer themselves.

Each work consciously introduces and tests a diverse range of materials and challenges the passive role of the audience in live performance. *Total Dik!* does so by incorporating 'to-hand' technology including tablets, smart phones, live compositing and streaming to wireless devices. These techniques contrast, add to and affect the Chroma Key environment as they are placed in conjunction with live theatre performance and other modes of presentation and spectatorship.

The placing of the audience in multiple sites of spectatorship – in the studio control room, on the stage floor and even at times banished backstage as the performers take control of relinquished production technologies – echoes Lehmann's post-dramatic and as we have iterated arguably signals something more. *RUFF*'s emphasis on the solo performance, as a connection between the audience and the pre-recorded, imbues immersion. It reflects Svoboda's 1950 adaptation of *The Eleventh Commandment* that utilises a chase and a shootout that involves the actor on stage and clever use of pre-recorded footage (Gieseckam, 2007: 53). While Svoboda's work was bold and overt, in *RUFF* the use of film and more accurately Chroma Key is far more tender, evoking an empathic response from the audience. *RUFF* does this as it captures Peggy performing in the lead. It does more too. It is used to fill the blanks in the story, her memory, to draw in images, which at once represent the performers influences and invoke the nostalgia and ephemera of memory.

## **Conclusion**

Among other experiments, the introduction of Chroma Key as a material scenic device impacts on and reshapes theatre production and its reception, particularly where it has implications for theatrical practice, production and process. There are three points of convergence to be considered here: Bay-Cheng, Kattenbelt, Lavender and Nelson's (2010) collective editorial contribution to the discussion around the intermedial as a movement



gathering momentum in theatre; Gieseckam's (2007) establishment of historical longevity in the relationship between stage and screen as moment of significant realisation; and Eckersall, Gretchen and Scheer's theory of New Media Dramaturgy. In their conjunction, it is possible to see the dissipation of once firm and stable boundaries, and loss of weight and meaning in border disputes as the discourses of cinema and theatre collide and blur beyond recognition. As theatre-makers we must consider these ramifications. Transmedial techniques readily challenge or subvert any attempt to hold onto clear-cut divisions. The introduction of projected recorded material into *RUFF* and *Total Dik!* (and those in a long history preceding them) is not the only measure here. The interaction between the actor(s) and the mediated materials – its intermediality – reorients the way the theatre production is framed and received or seen. Chroma Key offers tremendous flexibility in the method of approach allowing us as theatre makers to challenge the established, developing new frames and parameters for experimentation. This builds upon the postdramatic and draws from a long history of overlaps and tensions between the theatrical and filmic discourses. However, we argue that it also enables theatre making to push into new territory. Chroma Key Theatre significantly impacts on our notions of drama, fiction and the dramatic text, or at the very least presents the certainty of uncertainty and unrealised possibility.

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### Biographies

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