Title: **IM/UR II: Identity Exchange**

Genre: Performance Installation: Techno-Esoterica

Applicant's Role in Production: Director/Designer/Technologist/Performer, Lead Artist

Production Format: Interactive Performance Installation

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**Brief Project Description** (do not exceed space given below)

**IM/UR II: Identity Exchange** is an interactive performance installation that will involve head-mounted displays (HMDs), stereoscopic video, interaction with real-time virtual worlds, exotic input devices, music, and a live cyborg-performer named UR (Universal Remote). It is a kind of parallel work to another project of mine, also entitled **IM/UR** (the "II" in the new title does not indicate a sequel, but rather a parallel). **IM/UR II: Identity Exchange** is an entirely new piece that borrows some of the concepts of the previous work.

This piece turns on certain post-humanist ideas regarding identity and consciousness. The notion that consciousness, like data, is not contingent on specific and unique corporeal embodiment is a popular one among many contemporary cyber-theorists. This work will both embrace and critique this post-humanist concept of embodiment and identity. By using (HMDs) to accomplish a sensory exchange of perspectives, I will take the hand of the spectator and together we will trust-fall into this hypothesis. The spectator will participate in a playful and performative prognostication of the future of consciousness and cyborg identity.
Title: *IM/UR*

Year: 2003

**Technical**

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**Web Information** (answer only if sample work is in Web format)

- URL __________________________________________________________________________ (if more than one please list them below)
- Browser requirement(s)
- Plug-in requirement(s)
- This sample requires broadband connection (fast Internet connection)
- A local copy of the sample work has been included with the application

**Special Information For Viewing:**

This DVD should play on Mac, PC, or any DVD player. The video is about 12 minutes long.

**Description of Work** (use an additional sheet if necessary)

*IM/UR* is an in-progress work of digital performance. All aspects, including the technology and the design, should be considered sketches. Much of the technology for this work is still in development. The segment I have submitted includes only the first few minutes of the production.

*IM/UR* is the tragic love story of a pair of techno-magicians and mystic sorcerers, UR and IM—a cyborg and zombie, respectively. It weaves a haunting, media-saturated metaphor for the (post)modern, (post)human condition. This ongoing, multi-year project began in 2002 in cooperation with Arizona State University’s Institute for Studies in the Arts. The process is an example of true intellectual fusion and cross-disciplinary collaboration involving a large team of artists, engineers, and computer scientists in the creation, testing, refinement, and creative demonstration of new technologies for performance.

Though *IM/UR* focuses on the misadventures of the two title characters, the play is more particularly concerned with the slash that comes between their names. The play explores the divides that make binaries possible—male/female, self/other, subject/object, organic/digital, human/divine—and our desire to overcome those divisions. The idea of division, which I conceive of as performative rather than foundational, is a frequent subject of interrogation in my work.

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The lighting and video on all three screens are all controlled by flex-sensors attached to my body as I perform the role of UR. Much of the music is controlled by Michelle Ceballos—who plays IM—through her manipulation of the black cards on the white table. This interactive “music table” is made possible through video sensing.
Lance Gharavi

If you are sending more than one sample, please copy this page. Sample(s) must be cued: indicate how long each sample should be viewed for a COMBINED viewing time of no more than 15 minutes. If slides are included in this application, please list the title and year of the work on this form.

Title: **Sound Zero**

Year: **2002**

Technical

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Web Information (answer only if sample work is in Web format)

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___ Browser requirement(s)

___ Plug-in requirement(s)

___ This sample requires broadband connection (fast Internet connection)

___ A local copy of the sample work has been included with the application

Special Information For Viewing:

This DVD should play on Mac, PC, or any DVD player. The video is about 5 minutes long.

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

*Sound Zero* is an interactive, digital performance installation that solemnly recalls the chaos created by the destruction and collapse of the World Trade Center towers on Sept. 11. It was presented by the Institute for Studies in the Arts and the Herberger College of Fine Arts at Arizona State University.

I conceived *Sound Zero* as an interactive space in which viewers participate in creating the work. While I perform, the movements of the viewers around the space, through and into pools of light, cue a computer to play digital recordings of the voices of actual emergency workers attempting to cope with the chaos and terror in the minutes and hours following the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

There is no story, no beginning or end beyond what the spectators create themselves. Much like the actual aftermath of 9-11, *Sound Zero* unfolds and evolves in response to the activities of the witnesses.

*Sound Zero* was a direct response to an immediate and shattering social, cultural, and political reality. In this work I employed strategies that empowered the spectators, avoided the re-inscription of exhaustively repeated iconography, de-familiarized the painfully familiar, and interrogated my own means of representation as structures of authority.
Title: *Dancing on the Emerald Table: (Mis)adventures in Esoterica and Performance*

Year: 2004

Technical

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Web Information (answer only if sample work is in Web format)

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__ This sample requires broadband connection (fast Internet connection)   
__ A local copy of the sample work has been included with the application

Special Information For Viewing:

Description of Work (use an additional sheet if necessary)

This article is forthcoming in *Text and Performance Quarterly*, a refereed journal of the National Communications Association. The journal is published by Routledge. It describes my ongoing work on a digital performance project entitled *IM/UR* (a video of which I have submitted as a work sample). Many of the theories I develop in the article will inform the work on my proposed project.
I am a theatre artist. I am a performance artist. I’m afraid I don’t treat the distinction between the two approaches as seriously as some would like. I work comfortably across and between the various categories that divide these disciplines, that is to say, I am a performer, director, designer, writer, theorist, and technologist. Though I can easily distinguish conceptual and categorical boundaries, honoring them, reifying them, has never been my strong suit.

My work has focused on two areas of concern: digital technology and mystic traditions. I approach the latter as an artist and a theorist, mining these traditions for enduring sets of ideas, models, and webs of connections. By reading them through a sensibility informed by contemporary critical theory, I am seeking to generate performance work that is intimately informed by hybrid theories that overcome our deeply embedded romantic/materialist disjunction and shed new light on current conceptions of language, performance, and creation.

Since I first began using digital media in my work in the early 1990s, I have noted a certain suspicion amongst many of my colleagues in the theatre. For them, electronic media enter the theatre as thieves in the temple. Romantically, the theatre is often framed as one of the few remaining refuges from the ever-increasing mediatization of experience within our culture. It is a sanctum of presence in the vast billion-screen multi-plex that is contemporary reality.

It has, in part, always been this romantic and morally charged clash, with its technophobic and technophilic passions, that draws me to this kind of work. The play of oppositions involved is somehow primal to me, even if the argument about the distinctions between the live and the mediated has strained its vocal cords in an attempt to ward off irrelevance.

Yet some media are live, of course—live video, for instance, and virtual reality. They are present in time with us, if not in space. They do not have the inevitability of film. It is this
quality of what I call “temporal presence” that draws me to technologies like live video, real-time sensing, and virtual reality for use in my live performance work.

The tension between the actual and virtual, between the organic and the digital has been a primary concern in my work. My techno-theatrical creations collide and collude with the primacy of performative presence. What has made this work so engaging to me is not the spectacle of techno-wizardry; it is the fact that it is not a wholly computerized spectacle of absence but a site at which the [w]hol[l]y present performer makes contact with the digital, the [w]hol[l]y (or unholy) absent, thereby producing a performative hybrid. In this, I seek a kind of prognostication of the future of the performer, not as a dualistic entity (a human connected to technology), but as a liminal creature, a cyborg. But if such is the evolution of the performer, it is an evolution into monsterhood. It is a monster that can view, with its Janus-faced head, both collision and collusion, both utopia and dystopia.

For me, Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein has been an inspirational text in this regard. Her monster embodies the profound ambivalences of both technology and the creative act. On the one hand, creation—technological or artistic—is closely linked to the blasphemous action of the Gnostic demiurge. As Umberto Eco warns, “the moment you pick up the clay, electronic or otherwise, you become a demiurge, and he who embarks on the creation of worlds is always tainted with corruption and evil.” Conversely, there is the Kabbalistic tradition of the golem, the mystic’s version of the cyborg or Frankenstein’s monster. For the Kabbalist the creation of the golem through magical means was conceived of as a witness to their spiritual perfection. It was a creative way to achieve contact with the Divine. Much of the tension of my work lies in the moral and spiritual oscillation between these conceptions—salvational and apocalyptic—of artistic creation and technology.
Project Description: The working title of this project is IM/UR II: Identity Exchange. This is not a sequel to my previous work, IM/UR. The "II" of the working title does not indicate a continuation of a previous narrative; it suggests parallel lines. This is a parallel project that appropriates the title and some of the basic concepts involved in IM/UR. Identity Exchange is IM/UR as it might exist in a (somewhat) parallel universe. It continues my critical exploration of cyborg mysticism and further develops my pop-culture-infused, techno-esoteric aesthetic.

This work is a performance installation rather than a work of theatre. The spectators, the technology, and I—as a reconceived and redesigned UR—will be the only performers. The project is in the very early planning stages. It exists only as a computer virus in my imagination.

The work turns on an exploration of the post-humanist notion that consciousness—like data—is transferable and independent of the corporal body on which it seems to rely. This idea is championed by (among others) Philip Zhai in Get Real: A Philosophical Adventure in Virtual Reality. Zhai suggests the possibility of "interpersonal-tele-presence," a transferring of consciousness between individuals. This popular and puzzling post-humanist concept is thoughtfully critiqued by Katherine Hayles in How We Became Posthuman. My project will embrace (with marketing-executive glee) the dismantling of the liberal humanist subject in cybernetic discourse while slyly critiquing this stance and the fate of embodiment and identity it prophesizes.

The key technological component of this project will be a set of specially designed head-mounted displays (HMDs), or "virtual reality goggles." These devices, which the user wears on her head, include a set of stereo headphones and a pair of tiny televisions that fit over each eye. The latter allow the spectator to see stereoscopic visual data piped into the headsets; that is, the video, animation, or virtual reality displayed on the small screens of the HMD appear three-
dimensional. These HMDs will be designed to be non-immersive. The user will see the stereoscopic visual data on the screens while simultaneously being able to look through these images to observe the world around them. I have worked with these devices in previous projects.

The HMDs for this project, however, will be designed differently. They will have tiny video cameras mounted over each eyepiece and small microphones mounted outside of each earpiece. They will also be able to fluidly switch to immersive mode, screening out the outside world so that the user only sees the visual media playing on the screens of the HMD.

The spectator enters the space—perhaps a room in a gallery—where I, as the cyborg UR (Universal Remote), am performing on a small platform. I wear an HMD, and several others are placed on a table in front of the platform. I invite the spectator to don one of the HMDs. When they do, they hear music in the headsets and my voice becomes amplified as I speak to them. They see a stereoscopic, computer-generated virtual world through the goggles that appears to be superimposed over my living body and the room around them, which now appear ghostly and insubstantial. They will be able to control their movement through this virtual world by means of their own interaction with an input device. I have yet to decide exactly what input device the spectator will use for this purpose. Possibly video sensors or a floor sensor will track their movements in space. Possibly they will manipulate input devices—in the form of “intelligent fetish-wear,” like a joystick codpiece and a track-ball bustier—mounted on my body.

At a certain point, I will invite the spectator to exchange identities with me. I will become them and they will become me. The HMDs will become completely immersive, blocking out the surrounding environment. The stereo sound in the spectator’s HMD will then come from the microphones mounted over my earpieces and stereoscopic video from the two video cameras mounted on my HMD will be displayed on the screens of the spectator’s HMD.
The reverse will also apply. The spectator will see and hear everything from my point of view on the platform and I will see and hear everything from the spectator's point of view. This interaction will continue for as long as the spectator wishes, but at some point I will turn off the identity exchange function, inviting the spectator to remove the HMD and return to his or her own identity and reality.

The spectator moves through at least two shifts in identity with this piece. First, they become cyborg as they don the HMD. Second, they become me as their perception (and consciousness?) shifts to me and mine to them.

**Feasibility:** I will work with an electrical engineer to either design and construct the HMDs for this project or modify my existing HMDs. I will enlist the aid of my longtime collaborator, Mark Reaney, to design and build the virtual world and work with other designers and artist to design the lighting, costume, compose the text, and assemble the other elements of the piece. I have worked with all of these technologies previously, though never for the purpose of "identity exchange." The performance installation approach is similar to my previous work on *Sound Zero* and my current work with Guillermo Gomez-Pena and La Pocha Nostra.

**Use of Work:** The work may be installed and performed in galleries, theatres, or museums. It requires the living presence of performer and spectator. I further expect to use this technology in other installation works that explore the concept of identity.

**Budget Narrative:** I expect to be able to produce this work for $35,000, the amount of the Fellowship money. Most of the money will go towards developing and constructing the HMDs. Key to this effort will be paying an electrical engineer capable of executing such a project. Other funds will be dedicated to acquiring the necessary computer and media hardware as well as paying stipends to the other artists working on the project.
Lance Gharavi: Project Budget

*IM/UR II: Identity Exchange*
(working title)

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Lance Gharavi

Arizona State University
Herberger College of Fine Arts
Department of Theatre
PO Box 872002
Tempe, AZ 85287-2002

POSITIONS

Current
Assistant Professor of Performance Technology
Department of Theatre. Arizona State University. Tempe, AZ

Previous
Assistant Professor of Theatre
Department of Communications. Bethel College. North Newton, KS

Professional Memberships
Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE)
The Institute for the Exploration of Virtual Realities (i.e. VR), founding member
National Communications Association.
International Digital Media and Arts Association.

EDUCATION

Degrees Earned
Dissertation: "Dying to Know: A New Translation and Anagogic Investigation of
Aleksandr Blok's The Rose and the Cross"
Dissertation Chairs: John Gronbeck-Tedesco, Maria Carlson.
Principal course of study: New Media and Performance, Russian Theatre and Drama,
Directing.
Principal course of study: Russian Theatre and Drama, New Media and Performance,
Directing.
Principal course of study: Acting and Directing.

Further Education
Leningrad State Institute of Theatre, Music and Cinematography.
Leningrad, U.S.S.R. June 1989
Lance Gharavi

TEACHING

Arizona State University (from 2001)
THP 101, Introduction to the Art of Acting
THP 102, Fundamentals of Acting
THE 440, Theatre Forms and Contexts
THP 502, Aesthetics of Performance Art
THP 494/598 and DAN 494/598, Performance Technology
THE 220, Principles of Dramatic Analysis
THP 428, Theatre and the Future

Bethel College (2000-2001)
Acting Styles
Principles of Stage and Performance
Arts Seminar
Forensics

RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Publications

Editorial Work

Conference Presentations
“Dancing on the Emerald Table: Issues of Performance and Esoterica.”
National Communications Association Conference. Miami, FL. November 2003
"Invoking a Hermetic Theatre: An Occult Manifesto for Performance, Theory, and the Academy."
"Seeming and Being: A Report from the Front of Digital Performance."
"Sound Zero: An Interactive Grief-scape."
"Sound Zero: 9/11 and the Performance of Techno-Mourning."
"Adorno’s Challenge: Questions for the Profession."
"Dreams and Nightmares: Re-Imagining Responsibility After 9-11."
"Digital Performance: The Integration of Emerging Technologies into Theatrical Production."
"The Responsibilities of Response: Terrorism, Disaster and the Creative Community."
Session Chair/Moderator. Ethics and the Arts Conference. Tempe, AZ. October 2001.
"Performing Digital Herme(neu)tics: Of Orange Peels, Dead Roses, Silicon, and Salvation."
"Standing at the Circumference: Towards a Theory of the Theatrical Symbolic."
"Backwards and Forwards: The Recent Work of i.e. VR, 1998-1999."
"The Production Work of i.e.VR." Poster presentation.
Association for Theatre in Higher Education Conference. Chicago, IL. August 1997
"Performing Spaces: Designing and Staging a Virtual Point of View."
"Radzinsky’s Conversations with Socrates: Terror and Textual Ellipses."
35th Anniversary Central Slavic Conference. Lawrence, KS. April 1997.
"The Shape of Theatre to Come." Keynote Address.
"Creating Virtual Worlds for the Stage." Featured Workshop.
"Virtual Reality in Performance: The Adding Machine."
"The Empty <cyber>Space: Towards a Virtual Theatre."
"Consorting with the Demon: The Death of Theatre and Other Minor Matters."

Work in Archives

IM/UR and Sound Zero. In the archives of Dedale, a European organization dedicated to promoting and archiving innovative new media artworks. Paris, FR.
Various works with i.e. VR. Digital Performance Archive. University of Salford, UK.

Performance and Production

A collaboration with renoun performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña and La Pocha Nostra on this interactive, interdisciplinary work of performance.
My recent digital performance work will be shown at Villette Numérique, a festival of electronic arts and new media, the first biennial festival devoted to digital creation. Paris, FR.

Performer. One-man show.

Complete re-edit of video and production of DVD for distribution and archiving.

Performer. One-man show.

Performer. A reading of new text and public showing of video.

The Beckett Project. ASU West Gallery. November 2003
Artist. A series of gallery installations based on the work of Samuel Beckett.

Performer and primary collaborator. An original solo-performance work.

Lead Investigator/Director/Designer/Technologist/Performer. A public presentation of work in progress.

UstCaM 02 and Joystick Codpiece. Spring 2003.
Designer. These are two patentable devices for use in digital performance: an adjustable stereoscopic camera mount; and a wearable input device, the first in a line of intelligent fetish-wear.

Performer. Staged reading of original play.

The Magic Flute. i.e. VR, University of Kansas. April, 2003.
Production Consultant/Dramaturge. A ground-breaking production that utilizes virtual reality and other digital media to augment a live production of Mozart’s opera.

The DMA/AME is an ongoing project that involves teams of investigators from the Colleges of Engineering and Applied Sciences and the College of Fine Arts in multidisciplinary research into innovations in art and technology.
Lance Gharavi

**IM/UR. Ongoing.**

Primary Investigator/Director/Designer/Technologist/Performer. This is a multi-year digital performance project.

**911: Operation My Big Hands.** Theater in My Basement. Phoenix, AZ. October, 2002.

Actor. Staged reading.


Performer. A live webcast production commemorating the anniversary of September 11, 2001

**Enemy Exploded.** ASU. April, 2002.

Writer/Performer.


Directorial Consultant. Solo digital performance art by Jeff McMahon.


Artist. Original solo digital performance installation.

**Infinite Justice.** ASU. December 2001.

Artist. Original solo digital performance installation.

**Directing**

*SubUrbia*  
Arizona State University. 2003.

*The Father*  
Bethel College. 2001.

*The Marriage of Figaro*  
Bethel College. 2001.

*Baby with the Bathwater*  

*Love Poem #98*  
University of Kansas. 1999.

*The Vampire*  

*Tesla Electric*  
University of Kansas. 1998.

*Play*  
University of Kansas. 1996.

*Canvass*  
English Alternative Theatre.

*The Beadsman*  
English Alternative Theatre.


(CTF).

*Rockaby (I & II)*  
University of Kansas. 1993.

*Coverage*  
University of Kansas. 1993.

*Victoria Station*  

*A Poor Player*  

*The Birthday Party*  
Drake University. 1988.

*The Dumb Waiter*  
Drake University. 1988.

*The Flies*  
Drake University. 1988.

**With i.e. VR**

Founding Member of The Institute for the Exploration of Virtual Realities (i.e. VR). i.e. VR was founded in 1994 by myself and Professors Mark Reaney and Ronald Willis. i.e. VR is an organization operating within the University Theatre and the Department of
Theatre and Film at the University of Kansas and dedicated to exploring the application of
virtual reality and other related new media to live theatre production and performance. i.e. VR is
known around the world as one of the chief pioneers in the field of digital performance.

Below is a complete list of i.e. VR's productions and a description of my involvement in
them. Some of this information is repeated from the "Directing" section.

**The Magic Flute**
University of Kansas 2003.

**Machinal**
University of Kansas. 1999.

**Love Poem #98**
University of Kansas. 1999

**Tesla Electric**
University of Kansas. 1998.

**Wings**
University of Kansas. 1996.

**Play**
University of Kansas. 1996.

**The Adding Machine**
University of Kansas. 1995

**Plays Authored**

*Enemy Exploded* (co-writer)
Performed at the Lyceum Theatre, Tempe, AZ. 2002.

*A Poor Player*
Performed at Hashinger Hall. Lawrence, KS. 1992.

*Shades of the Ineffable* A dramatic collage in one act.
Performed at Medbury Hall, Des Moines, IA. 1989.

*Like Father* A tragic-comedy in one act.
Performed at The Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center, Waterford, CT. 1989

**Acting**

**Professional**

*Love's Labours Lost*
Kansas Summer Theatre. Lawrence, KS. 1996/  
Holofernes

*Much Ado About Nothing*
Benedick

*The Comedy of Errors*
Kansas Summer Theatre. Lawrence, KS. 1993.
Dromio
Lance Gharavi

In The Sunlight of Athens
Theatre for Young America. Overland Park, KS. 1993.

Young Columbus

Jungal Book

In the Labyrinth of the Minotaur

A View From the Bridge

Don Quixote of La Mancha
Theatre for Young America. Overland Park, KS. 1992

Donny's House

Purlie Victorious

The Life and Times of Jesse James

Dinosaur

Blackbeard

Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?

Pippin

Grease

The Fantasticks

Three Boards and a Passion

International

The Cherry Orchard

Broadway Goes to Leningrad
Lincoln Center, New York, NY; Waterford, CT; Leningrad, U.S.S.R. 1989

Community

Graf Spee

Can You Hear Me?
The Drama Workshop. Des Moines, IA. 1990.
HONORS AND AWARDS


Rockefeller Foundation Grant. Under review. For Patriot Acts. Primary Investigator.

Arizona Commission on the Arts/NEA Project Grant. For IM/UR. Listed as Artist. Fall 2003.

Herberger College of Fine Arts Research Grant. Spring, 2002.

Herberger College of Fine Arts Research and Creative Activity Grant

Foreign Language Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship.

Kuhlke Russian Theatre Fellowship.

Mark Amin Scholarship.
   University of Kansas, Department of Theatre and Film.

Graduate Teaching Assistantship.
   University of Kansas, Department of Theatre and Film.

Charles "Buddy" Rogers Scholarship.
   University of Kansas, Department of Theatre and Film. 1995.

Dean's List.

Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center Grant. 1989.

Scholarship to The National Theatre Institute

Theatre Scholarship.

President's List.
   Drake University. Fall 1988.

James J. Frederick Scholarship.
   Drake University. 1988.

Dean's Scholarship.
   Drake University. 1985-87.