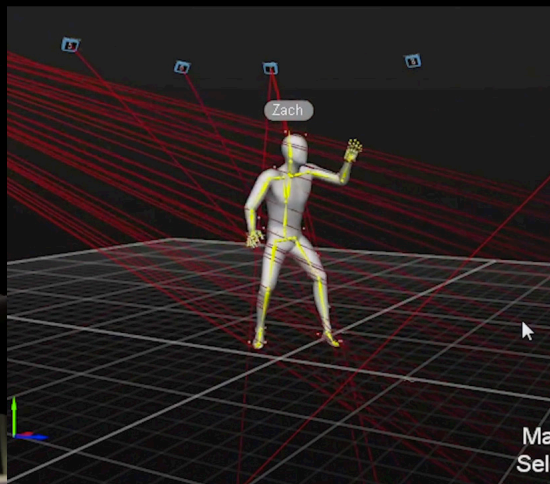# To
Be
With
Hamlet

A live performance of Hamlet in Virtual Reality.

Tagline

To Be With Hamlet is a live theater performance in Virtual Reality that allows anybody anywhere to have an intimate experience with **Hamlet**, Shakespeare's dramatic masterpiece. The experience enables audiences to walk the battlements of Elsinore Castle with Hamlet as he confronts the ghost of his murdered father.

Synopsis

To enter the experience, you put on a Vive alongside up to fifteen audience members in the designated exhibition space. Immediately, you are transported to the illustrious Elsinore Castle, a grand stone fortress perched on a brotherhood of rocky cliffs. Before the performance begins, you will be free to explore the Castle with your fellow audience members.

When the performance begins, a thick fog will descend upon the battlements. Hamlet and his friend Horatio will climb onto the ramparts, in search of the mysterious ghost that has been haunting the castle. Soon the specter appears, dressed in the armor of the former king. Horatio warns Hamlet to avoid the ghost, but you and Hamlet will follow it along the battlements until Hamlet demands that the spirit reveal its intentions.

Turning, the spirit will declare itself to be the ghost of Hamlet's father, the fallen king, and impart the story of how he was murdered by his own brother. At the end of his speech, the ghost commands Hamlet to avenge his death.

Before Hamlet can make his reply, the morning sun peeks out of the far corner of the battlements, forcing the Ghost to depart. Speaking directly to you, Hamlet pledges to avenge his father's "most unnatural murder."

Horatio then catches up with Hamlet. Fearful that the ghost's message will be revealed, Hamlet takes up his sword and compels Horatio to swear that he will keep secret all that he has seen, so that no-one will learn of grim task with which Hamlet has been charged. The two then leave the battlements as the sun crests above the horizon.

Director's Statement by David Gochfeld

While virtual reality has long been a medium for "gee whiz" experiences, only recently have creators begun exploring how to use the technology to tell satisfying stories. Most of the practitioners working in narrative VR today approach it as an extension of film or video games. But I believe storytelling in VR is closer to the art of theater. In theater we create a fictional world that attains a feeling of reality through the physical presence of live performers and scenic elements, and the illusion of place presented on the stage is an essential element of the power of theatrical storytelling. Theater has always experimented with new ways of creating that sense of place, ranging from uncanny verisimilitude to minimal suggestions that engage the audience's imagination more actively. The recent wave of highly immersive site-specific productions such as Sleep No More is a testament to just how strongly audiences respond to being fully transported into a fictional world. Virtual reality is a powerful medium for doing just that.

To my knowledge, no one has yet explored the question: what happens when we bring actors and audience together into a virtual world? And from that follows: How do you stage a play in a virtual space? How do you, technically, allow the audience and actors to be in the same space together? What kind of play is suited to this sort of staging? And, if you believe, as I do, that the true power of theater lies in the live, real-time connection between the actor and the audience, can that relationship exist when mediated through VR technology?

"Can the live, real-time connection between actor and audience seen in theatre exist when mediated through VR technology?"

For this investigation, we've taken a cue from Hamlet in the Holodeck, Janet Murray's book about the future of storytelling using interactive technologies. As one of the most well known stories in the Western canon, Hamlet is a prime candidate for reinterpretation in a new medium. Of course, it's not an easy play to stage in any respect. But it does give us a fully drawn, psychologically believable character inhabiting a rich mythical-historical world -- key ingredients for a compelling and satisfying piece of theater and, we hope, VR.

Among the limitations of VR today is attention span: it would be foolhardy to expect anyone to sit through a full-length play in a VR headset. So we are using a short excerpt of Hamlet to explore the aesthetic, dramaturgical, and technical challenges posed by this new fusion of theatre and VR. We've chosen to stage the scene between Hamlet and his father's ghost because it is the key incitement to the dramatic action of the rest of the play, and it is a naturally theatrical encounter that lends itself to the kinds of enhancements that can be applied in a 3D CGI environment.

Through the combination of an immersive, virtual environment and a live, human performance, To Be With Hamlet is exploring new avenues for experience in VR. By adding real, human connection to VR performance, we are pushing into uncharted artistic territory.

Biographies

Javier Molina

Producer, Creator

Francisco Javier Molina is an engineer, actor and media artist working with virtual reality, motion capture, interactive installations, performance art and experimental film. He holds a degree in Telecommunications Engineering from the Army Polytechnic School in Quito,Ecuador.

He moved to New York City to study at NYU School of Engineering along with a minor in acting at Uta Hagen's HB Studio. He is currently working at NYU MAGNET as faculty researching VR and AR technologies and teaching motion capture workflow for virtual reality.

Javier's interest in performance has evolved from conventional theater to more eclectic and interactive practices, he has recreated famous performance-art pieces and interactive shows presented at the Brooklyn Experimental Media Center and night clubs in New York. His work offers a creative way to join passion and envolment with contemporary art and combine with cutting-edge technology.

David Gochfeld

Director

David Gochfeld creates performance experiences at the intersection of the real and virtual, drawing on his training in classical and contemporary theatrical techniques as well as interaction design and creative technology. He has created and performed pieces internationally and has recently shown work at the Tribeca Film Festival Interactive Playground, the Daily News Innovation Lab, Come Out And Play, and Creative Tech Week NYC. He co-created FutureMate, which won the first StoryCode Transmedia Hackathon at Lincoln Center, and was nominated for a New York Innovative Theatre Award. He also has been a member of the Lincoln Center Directors Lab. He holds a Masters from NYU's Interactive Telecommunications program, and trained with Jacques Lecoq, Philippe Gaulier, and at the National Shakespeare Conservatory.

Team Biographies

Zachary Koval
Cast

Originally from Portland, Oregon, Zachary received his BA in Acting at The University of the Pacific in Stockton, CA. In NYC he worked and trained for three years with Theatre Group Dzieci, an experimental theatre ensemble dedicated to exploring the sacred through the act of theatre. He is currently in production on an acro-dance-theatre piece entitled "Babel" premiering in January (www.babel.build).
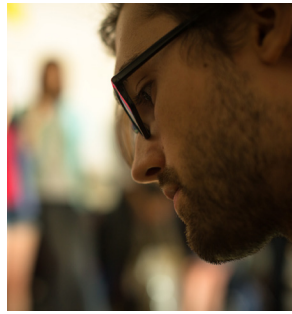
Owen Bell
Assistant Director

Owen Bell is a coder and designer working with games and virtual reality and a graduate of the MFA Game Design program at the NYU Game Center. His interests lie in the creative interactions that are made possible by the collaboration of humans with computers, best expressed through his project Mendel, which explores using genetic properties to create surreal, procedural flora. He wears many hats on the team, assisting both in the creative aspects of the production as well as drawing on his knowledge of Computer Science to develop the backend technology.

Roger Casey
Cast

Roger Casey is a NY based artist. Recent Theater credits: CasablancaBOX – Humphrey Bogart/Rick (HERE Arts), H5: Life after Death – Steffon (Schomburg Center), Good Girl Gone Bad – The Man (HERE Arts), Lunchtime in Heaven - Freddie Gray (48hrs in Harlem, National Black Theatre), The Return - Adam (Metropolitan Museum of Art), Tyson Vs. Ali - Mike Tyson & Muhammad Ali (3-Legged Dog,Foxy Films), The Misanthrope - Acaste (Shakespeare Theatre of NJ), 12th Night – Antonio (Shakespeare Theatre of NJ), Tragedy! A musical comedy - Aaron the Moor (Lucille Lortel Theatre).

Ifeoluwa Lawal
3D Modeler and Texture Designer

Ifeoluwa Lawal is an engineer, 3D modeler and artist studying at the Tandon School of Engineering at MAGNET, where he also works. He is creating the 3D set for Hamlet and mapping the photographed skin textures to the 3D Hamlet model so that that Prince of Denmark looks as realistic as possible when he is played live via motion capture. Working on Hamlet has given Ifeolulwa a deeper appreciation of Hamlet the play because he has had to convert every detail of Shakespeare's rich vision into the new medium of VR. He particularly enjoys the complex relationships portrayed in Hamlet.

T.K. Broderick
Sound Engineer

T.K. is a sound designer, film composer, and creative technologist. He is a graduate of USC's film production program and NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program, where he focused on developing real-time movement controlled sound, music, light, and image applications, driven by a fascination with ways in which the body can become a media interface and controller for live performance. His current project, ResonantBodies, explores the phenomenon of vibration in the body during vocalization as it relates to practices in classical Indian vocal music.

Brett Moody
Communications Director

Brett Moody is generating excitement and funding for To Be With Hamlet by creating and managing the project's website, print materials, development diaries, and social media platforms. Additionally, he is performing miscellaneous production tasks, writing applications for festivals and grants, and contributing to design decisions. He is an NYU film major who has directed and produced live-action film, 2D animation, and documentary pieces. His greatest passions are public service and Virtual Reality.

Contact: Help@hamletvr.org
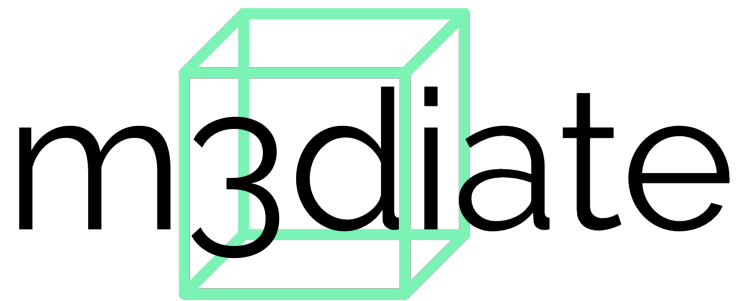
m3diate

Meet the M3diate Production Team

To Be With Hamlet is partnering with the M3diate team to deliver the Hamlet experience to audiences across the globe. The M3diate platform allows up to fifteen audience members to enter the scene and see each other as they explore the virtual Elsinore Castle together. It also provides the experience with spatialized audio. Below, you can find the profiles of M3diate's creators. For more about M3diate, visit http://www.m3diate.com.

Christian Grewell
M3diate Creative Lead

Bas in het Veld
M3diate Technical Lead

Ted Lee
M3diate Operations Lead

Christian is an adjunct professor of Interactive Media Arts and Business at NYU Shanghai and the partner of their Program on Creativity and Innovation. Christian's current research and projects involve the creation of networked, realtime spatially accurate audio and music creation in virtual reality environments. Christian lives in Shanghai, China and spends his time exploring the intersections of management, creativity, art and technology. He enjoys convincing really talented students to work with him. Christian has spent the past 16 years at NYU with a B.A in Economics and an MBA from the Stern School of Business.

Bas is a freelance programmer specialized in artificial intelligence and game development, currently lead programmer for two upcoming game releases. By combining creativity and technical know-how, he believes he can create a better world, even if that world is merely a virtual one. Being a stereotypical nerd, he naturally loves things like riding his motorcycle, jumping from planes and drinking coffee. Just like M3diate, To Be With Hamlet is an exciting piece of technology combining many different technical challenges, all waiting to be tackled.

Ted is an operations director at NYU Abu Dhabi focused on demand and project management. Ted has focused on building alignment between the academic departments and administrative services, in many cases, developing and delivering on joint initiatives offering new and creative opportunities for students, faculty, researchers and staff at NYUAD. M3diate was created via one of these initiatives.

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Sponsorship Opportunities

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To Be With Hamlet is looking for sponsors to help us bring our innovative fusion of ***live performance, motion capture,*** and ***multi-user Virtual Reality*** to several high-profile VR, Arts, and Technology exhibitions. *Hamlet* has already been shown at the prestigious **New York City Media Lab Summit** and the **NYC Kaleidoscope VR Summer Showcase**. Our next event is the **VR Days Europe** festival in Amsterdam, on November 3-6.

By blending the greatest literature of our past with the most cutting-edge technologies of the present, we have created an experience which can simultenously highlight a sponsor's reverence for tradition and hunger for innovation.

Do you represent a company that created one of *To Be With Hamlet's* core technologies, such as Unreal Engine, Ikinema, HTC Vive, or Optitrack? If so, please Email the address below to learn more about our ***special partnership opportunities.***

Sponsor Benefits

- Logo featured prominently during the experience.
- Logo featured on the production's blog, website (hamletvr.org), social media platforms, videos, and marketing materials.
- Sponsor profile on website, blog, and marketing materials.
- For larger sponsors, exclusive, private performances of the piece for the sponsor and their guests.
- Free tickets to public performances of the piece.

Interested in Sponsoring **To Be With Hamlet?**
Email *Help@hamletvr.org*

Learn More

For everything *To Be With Hamlet,* check out **hamletvr.org**.

Social Media Outlets

All are updated at least weekly.

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The Method of the Madness Blog

"Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't"
- Polonius, Act II, Scene II

The Method of the Madness weekly development blog will bring you all of *To Be With Hamlet's* latest **photos, videos, behind-the-scenes documentaries, press mentions**, and much more!

http://hamletvr.org/methodofthemadness/

38 Different

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