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SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIVE THEATRE AND THE OTHER MEDIA: A METAPHOR OF THE EPIPHYTE

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Abstract

The relationship between live and mediated has evolved to become a subject of increasing scholarly interest, particularly in the digital era, where access to theatre performance can be provided by media technology such as film, television, video, internet and handheld devices. Whereas live theatre relies on spatial compresence and temporal simultaneity, mediated theatre depends on technology to reach remote audiences. However, how such a relationship manifests in terms of positive and negative effects has remained largely underexplored. This study seeks to explore the symbiotic relationship between the two forms, using the botanical concepts of metamorphosis and the epiphyte. The main objective is to establish whether the relationship between live and mediated theatre in the Ghanaian context is parasitic, mutualistic and communalistic. Using a qualitative research approach, the study employs semi-structured interviews with theatre practitioners, digital media practitioners, as well as live and remote theatre audiences to establish how the rapid growth and development of media technology has impacted the fortunes of live theatre in Ghana. The research is anchored on the concept of the epiphyte to provide a deeper understanding of how the rapid development of media transmission technology affects audience choices, theatrical authenticity and artistic integrity of theatre. The study aims to contribute to scholarly discourse on the future of live theatre in the digital era. The findings inform theatre practitioners, scholars and policy makers on strategies to sustain theatre in Ghana.

Keywords: Symbiosis, Live theatre, mediated theatre, Epiphyte, media convergence

1. Introduction

Contemporary global dynamics in the performing arts and media technology have forced live and mediated theatre into a kind of involuntary symbiosis; it seems they have been plunged into a contract with no 'exit clauses'. In the context of this paper, live theatre is taken to mean one characterised by "the temporal simultaneity and spatial co-presence of performers and audiences" (Wurtzler, 1992, p. 89). The study also considers the definition of live theatre by Wilson (2015) as "the performance of a dramatic event by a group of actors in the presence of their counterparts, the audience members" (p. 7).

For mediated theatre, the study adopts the definition by Bay-Chang (2007) as “any theatrical performance that is watched or experienced through another medium without the audience necessarily having to be physically present at the time and place of the performance” (p. 37). With mediated theatre, the audience experiences theatre through such technological mediums as film, television, DVD, computer-based platforms, handheld devices, live streaming and so forth. Once the two, that is, live theatre and mediated theatre, must of necessarily coexist, it becomes imperative to examine the kind of relationship that emanates from such a symbiosis.

In an attempt to examine the relationship between the theatre on stage and theatre in other media more closely, the study draws from the concept of *epiphytes* in plant and environmental biology (botany), without attempting to go into the science of the phenomenon, recognising that this is outside the scope of this study. With this concept, certain plants, known as *epiphytes*, grow on top of other plants, and a symbiosis is established, by which either one of the trees dies, or both die, or both survive. ‘Symbiosis’, according to Leung and Poulin (2008), “is defined as an intimate interaction between different organisms, where at least one of the parties is obligatorily dependent on the association as a part of its life history.” In other words, symbiosis is a close relationship in which, at least one species benefits. For the other species in the symbiosis, the relationship may be positive, negative, or neutral.

2. Review of Related Literature

To put the study in proper perspective, it is essential to get a basic understanding of the concept of the epiphyte.

The Epiphyte

The term epiphyte, from the Greek *epi* (upon) and *phyton* (plant) (Williams, 2020), refers to a plant that grows on other plants for structural support and anchorage, and not for water or nutrient supplies (i.e., non-parasitic) (Laube & Zotz, 2006). They are usually independent of the host plant for nutrition, although they may sometimes damage the host plant, often by shading.

Epiphytes can be broadly classified as *holoepiphytes* (spending their entire life cycle in the canopy) and *hemiepiphytes* (spending some stage of their life rooted in terrestrial soil). Some epiphytes start life in the canopy and send roots to the ground (primary hemiepiphytes), whereas others start on the ground, grow to the canopy and lose terrestrial connections (secondary hemiepiphytes) (Benzing 2004; Lowman & Rinker 2004).

Some other species are temporarily epiphytic because their development is composed of an initial phase on the treetop, an intermediate phase as a hemiepiphyte with roots growing down to the forest floor, and a final phase as a mature tree, with its roots developing into the ground. Once the root of the epiphyte gets to the ground, it tends to grow faster, as it now draws its nutrients from both the ground and the host tree. This is the case of some *Ficus* species, which usually kill their host tree, which is why they are called “strangler trees” (see Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS).

The Akan ethnic group in southern Ghana calls the phenomenon *Nkrampan*. The Mamprusis, an ethnic group mainly found in the North-East region of Ghana, have various terms that describe this same phenomenon. Some call it *Doaama ka n'zinni* (get up for me to sit); others call it *kun zinni tinga* (will never sit on the ground), while other Mamprusis term it *Fa nlari* (Subjugate). All these terms have a common theme running through them, which is that the epiphyte does not grow from the ground. It grows on other plants. It always dominates and, at the end of the day, takes advantage of an already existing tree for its own existence. A typical example is an epiphyte the Botanists call the ‘sacred fig.’ Known as *Gamzeoo* among the Mamprusis. The Mamprusis believe that it never grows on the ground and will almost invariably always end up killing the host tree. On the contrary, the Plant and Environmental Biologists, through research, have explained that the relationship does not always lead to the death of the host tree, and that, in certain instances, the two species can co-exist to their mutual benefits, or to the advantage of one without any adverse effect on the other.

3. Methodology

The study employed desk research and purposively selected a plant and environmental biologist, three theatre practitioners, three theatre scholars, three media practitioners and ten theatre audience members (five live & five remote) for interviews to elicit their views on the relationship. I also undertook site visits to the Aburi Botanical Gardens in the Eastern region of Ghana and the Legon Botanical Gardens at the University of Ghana to observe the phenomenon of the epiphyte. There was also an element of accidental data collection, when on a trip to Tamale, the Northern regional capital, I chanced upon the phenomenon and took the opportunity to capture it as part of the data for the study.

The data gathering process for the study started by observing some theatre practitioners at various locations in Ghana, including the National Theatre, the Efua Sutherland Drama Studio at the University of Ghana, the Theatre Arts Department of the University of Education, Winneba and Dwabere, at the Kumasi cultural centre. Subsequently, I attended some live performances at the National Theatre and other venues, and observed that as some of the performances were taking place at theatre venues with live audiences, they were at the same time streamed live to remote audiences. This offered me the opportunity to contact and make arrangements to interview some of the selected respondents, some face-to-face, and others via telephone, to gather their views on the relationship between live and mediated theatre.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Results

The relationship that is established between the epiphyte and the host tree (phorophyte) can therefore manifest in at least one of the following:

Parasitism — a symbiotic relationship in which one species (the parasite) benefits while the other species (the host) is harmed. In this kind of relationship, the epiphyte, as it grows on top of the host tree and gets mechanical support, grows faster as it gets more sunlight and, at the same time, draws some of its nutrients from the host tree. A typical and commonly cited example of this symbiosis is between a host tree and the strangler *Ficus*. The strangler *Ficus* will start its life on top of the host tree, and gradually develop and extend its roots into the ground, and begin to grow in size and encircle the host. As this goes on, the host tree gets suffocated and eventually dies, and the strangler takes its place. A visual representation of this is the famous Strangler *Ficus* at the Aburi Botanical gardens in the Eastern region of Ghana, shown in figure 1 below:



Figure 1: A Strangler *Ficus* at Aburi Botanical Gardens. Aburi, Ghana.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/paulinuk99999/8580067890>

The inscription on the sign in the picture above explains that the tree was discovered as an epiphyte on a host at the Aburi Botanical Garden, Ghana, in 1906. By 1936, it had completely strangled the original tree and taken its place. A tour guide at the gardens corroborated the information and explained that the common name of the original tree (*Azelia Africana*) is the 'African Mahogany' tree. The African Mahogany is a very hard wood tree with thick and deep roots. However, with time, the Rubber Shade

tree was able to strangle it to death and has since survived until this day, serving as a prominent attraction to tourists and researchers who visit the garden.

Another example of a parasitic epiphyte is the *Mistletoe*. It begins its life off a host tree, and gradually, its roots are modified to penetrate the branches of the host to draw nutrients from it. With time, it may end up draining all the nutrients from the host tree, resulting in its death. As one plant biologist indicated

A good parasite does not kill its host, lest it also dies (Personal interview with a plant Biologist: July 19, 2022).

This is because, once the host is dead, the source of nutrients to the parasite is cut off, and it will not also be able to survive. It is for this reason that anytime it is observed that a dead tree had mistletoe attached to it, then they are both dead. Such a symbiosis results in the death of both species, unlike in the case of the strangler *Ficus*.

A careful analysis of the relationship between live theatre and mediated theatre appears to fit well into this concept. Live theatre, generally considered the mother of all the performing arts, becomes analogous to the host tree, whilst mediated theatre, an offshoot of media technology, can be taken as the epiphyte. Theatre, from its beginning, was produced, transmitted and consumed by co-present performers and audience, with the audience sometimes joining in the performances. With time, however, technologies of the times were incorporated into the production of theatre. All this while, the audiences experienced the performances in the presence of the performers in flesh and blood, in the here and now. This was the case from the ancient Greek period up until the early parts of the 20th century, when media technology such as radio and film were employed to transmit the theatrical performance to audiences who were not at the venue of the performance. It would be safe, then, to argue that this is the point at which the media began to grow on top of the theatre. In this case, it derived its nutrients (content) from the live theatre performance. With time, the media technology started growing faster, getting more exposure and gaining deeper roots into the soils of the arts to an extent that appears to suggest that live theatre is suffocating under the weight of mediated theatre. At this moment, though, one may not be able to postulate that mediated theatre has completely strangled the live theatre. However, it does make it harder for live theatre to get the necessary ‘sunlight’ for healthy growth. Writing in the early 1990s on television broadcasts of opera, Jeremy Tambling identified what he considered their “parasitic” quality. Video productions, he observed, “strove hard to generate the impression that the spectator was there in the opera house” (Morris, 2010).

If the root of theatre, and for that matter any performing art, is content (which is performance), then it can be argued that mediated theatre is yet to get its roots into the soil to enable it to strangle live theatre to death and take its place. Then the symbiosis between them might have to be looked at in the context of mutualism, or commensalism.

Mutualism is defined as a symbiotic relationship in which both species benefit. Mutualism describes a type of mutually beneficial relationship between organisms of different species. According to Bailey (2023), “It is a symbiotic relationship in which two different species interact with and in some cases, totally rely on one another for survival”. In this kind of relationship, the epiphyte grows on the phorophyte, derives its nutrients from it, and, in return, offers it some protection or defends the host tree against attacks by potential and real external aggressors. They both enjoy mutual benefits. Considering the history of live and mediated theatre, it is clear that they have both come to stay. Live theatre had survived for centuries without the media technology as a vessel to reach its audiences. And then media technology came in very strongly. Characteristic of theatre, it has taken every technology (first, film, then television, DVD, internet, computer-based platforms, handheld devices, and so on) in its stride. Whereas theatre has employed all of these as part of its *mise-en-scène* in the nature of props, functional or non-functional, the technology has, in turn, offered theatre the vehicle to reach wider audiences, albeit at a cost. So far, there has been no evidence to suggest that the technology has, in any way, subdued the live theatre. One may, therefore, be tempted to conclude that the symbiosis between live theatre and mediated theatre is mutualistic.

Commensalism is a symbiotic relationship in which one species benefits while the other species remains unaffected. In this kind of relationship, the effect on the host plant is neutral. Neither does it benefit, nor is it harmed (Leung & Poulin, 2008). As depicted in *Figure 2* below, the epiphyte and the host tree are both looking healthy and growing. The epiphyte derives, at least, structural support from its host, without necessarily harming it in any way.



Figure 2: Commensalism: Epiphytes (*Bumelia*) on a shea tree at Aburi Botanical Gardens, Ghana.

Source: Baba Haruna

Observing the pictorial representation of the concept in the foregoing, one would realise that the common denominator in this concept is that there is always some kind of benefit to the epiphyte. The relationship is then defined by the effect of the symbiosis on the host. Where the effect of the symbiosis on the host tree is positive, it can be said that the relationship is mutualistic. If the effect on the host is negative, the relationship is parasitic, and if the effect on the host is neutral, then we can say that the relationship between them is commensalistic. For a simplified analysis, I represent the phenomenon in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Symbiosis between living Plants

Host	Epiphyte	
		Positive
	Positive	Mutualism
	Negative	Parasitism
	Neutral	Commensalism

Source: Baba Haruna

Transposing this concept onto the discussion between live and mediated theatre, we come out with Table 2 below, which supposes that under any circumstance, the media would always derive some of its elements from theatre in the form of content, context, themes and philosophy. Historically, it has been established that theatre is the mother of all the performing arts, incorporating every new art form or technology that comes its way, and since the major element of every media technology, be it film, television, radio or any new media device is performance, it will not be out of place to claim that the media started off as the epiphyte on the bark of theatre, and therefore will always stand to enjoy some positive benefit from the symbiosis. In that vein, I would refer to mediated theatre as ‘epiphytic theatre’. I then examine the relationship between the epiphytic theatre and its host, the live theatre, as illustrated in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Symbiosis between live and mediated theatre

Live Theatre	Mediated Theatre	
		Positive
	Positive	<i>Mutualism</i>
	Negative	<i>Parasitism</i>
	Neutral	<i>Commensalism</i>

Source: Baba Haruna

This study draws from the above to examine the relationship between live and mediated theatre in Ghana. Table 2 represents a direct transposition of the symbiosis between plants into the study of the relationship between live and mediated theatre. In this case, as in Plant and Environmental Biology, it is observed that the relationship between live and mediated theatre depends on the effect of the symbiosis on live theatre. Looking at the theatre industry in Ghana vis-à-vis the development and penetration of media technology in the context of audience behaviour, it is clear that the media almost invariably derive some benefits in the symbiosis.

Content is key to the survival of other media. These other media are technology-dependent. Technology grows and develops at a speed that live theatre can hardly match up to. Yet, live theatre has always managed to stand the test of time, even as it appears that the world has become totally mediated. In simple terms, live theatre is not a technological art. In other words, it does not exist because of technology. In fact, live theatre is an accommodating art. It has incorporated different kinds of technology at different times in history, and, perhaps, left the most enduring legacy for the other arts, as distinct from the enduring legacy of mediated theatre, which is mechanical reproduction.

It is important to acknowledge that this phenomenon applies to other organisms (Leonard, 2008), including humans. However, I chose to examine it from the plant and environmental biology (Botany) perspective because that appeared to offer a clearer pictorial demonstration of the concept, as it may be applied to the relationship between live and mediated theatre. Another reason is that the concept of symbiosis offers a useful framework to study the collaboration between theatre and the media. It provides an exceptionally abundant source of metaphors and analogies (Leonard, 2008) that I find useful, without attempting to go into the science and theories of the phenomenon. Therefore, the analysis is limited only to the metaphorical value it affords me for this study. Leonard (2008) intimates that metaphors and analogies from the natural world are a great source of inspiration for the study of systems and their capacity to aid in the identification of solutions to societal and organisational issues. It is based on this assertion that I found it useful to adapt this concept, alongside the principles of ‘mediamorphosis’ by Fidler (1997) as analytical tools to explore the relationship between live and mediated theatre.

It becomes easier to establish the relationship between theatre and the new media technology if one situates the discourse in the context of the concept of ‘mediamorphosis’ as postulated by Fiddler (1997). He coined the word ‘mediamorphosis’ in 1990, which he subsequently explained, “is not so much a theory as it is a unified way of thinking about the technological evolution of communication media” (p. 23). The various media technologies that have emerged in the course of history to affect and influence other already existing media forms do not usually do so in a vacuum. Every new media technology emerges from a process of metamorphosis of the old media. Clearly, it has been generally proven that the development of new media technology does not necessarily lead to the death of the older forms—indeed, they continue to evolve and adapt (Fiddler, 1997). The underlying principles of the concept of mediamorphosis, according to Fiddler are: 1) that the new and the old always evolve and coexist; 2)

that new media do not arise spontaneously and independently, but they emerge from a metamorphosis of the old ones, they live together, in other words a symbiosis is established in which neither the old nor the new dies; 3) that in the course of the symbiosis, the new media, rather than kill the old one, tends to propagate the dominant traits of the old one; 4) that all form of communication media, old or new, are compelled to adapt to whatever changes in the media ecosystem or die; 5) that the development of new media technology is based on opportunity as well as motivating socio-politico-economic needs; and 6) that new media technology does not necessarily become instant success. There is always a delayed adoption.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the concept of mediamorphosis strongly advocates 'Hybridisation', which by implication denotes a symbiotic relationship between the new and the old, as in the case of the epiphyte. This then makes it plausible to adopt the two concepts as a framework to explore the relationship between live and mediated theatre in this study.

As it has already been established, media transmission technology has resulted in several mediated forms of theatre, such as film, television, video, computer, and livestreaming, to the extent that it seems live theatre is under serious pressure from the increasing growth of technologically mediated theatre. In other words, mediated theatre is ostensibly becoming more popular with audiences through other media such as television, computer-based internet platforms, handheld devices, live streaming, and so on.

On the relationship that is established between live theatre and mediated theatre, findings of this study indicated that the relationship is, largely, complementary, even though some respondents insisted that the relationship between live and mediated theatre is parasitic, referring to the media as the parasite on live theatre. Those who held the view that relationship is complementary, insisted that mediated theatre has come to complement live theatre without either of them being a threat to the other. One theatre practitioner asserted that:

By all indications, there will be even more advanced ways of transmitting performances to audiences, and I think it is, as I said, complementary. Yes, so it is complementing what I am doing...how do we marry these two so that instead of it being a disadvantage, we turn it into an advantage? That should be our focus as theatre practitioners.

Viewed this way, technology comes across as something that has come to augment the theatre business, not to kill live theatre. In the view of another respondent, "It's reaching out to a lot of people, and I think it's in a way coming to help the theatre itself". For this category of respondents, the two, that is, live and mediated theatre, need each other and can co-exist without any problems. Of course, live theatre will need the media to advertise and exhibit its performances. If, through the media, the audience gets to know that they can watch the performance in the media without having to leave their homes, some will definitely do so, and that will be in addition to the number of people who will physically be in the auditorium to watch the same play. A theatre practitioner, in sharing his views about this question, asserted: "I believe that if we build or we rely on them (new technologies), we are going to blow... we are going to do more, we are going to reach out to many people than we are doing now..." Another respondent cited the exigencies of the Covid-19 pandemic to make a strong point for the mutual relationship between live and mediated theatre thus:

...I think they benefit from each other. Let's take when the Coronavirus came, for instance, there was a ban on gatherings and whatnot. So, people had to use the media to reach the masses. So with someone like Uncle Ebo Whyte, since he has been doing theatre production for a long time, he has been taking videos of them. So when Corona hit, he sought to use the other alternative to reach the masses. In addition, I think it worked perfectly, because people were in the comfort of their homes now watching theatre performances, I mean, live streaming and all that...

It is clear that theatre practitioners think that perhaps this shows the commencement of another phase of the development of theatre in Ghana that needs to be explored to the advantage of live theatre, since

technology has come to influence not only how theatre is produced, but also how it is consumed. Thus, the ubiquity and easy accessibility of digital devices may be considered as directly related to the consumption patterns of theatre patrons across the country. This can only work for the mutual advantage of live and mediated theatre, at least, in the short run.

Theatre makers did not initially appear to fully appreciate the power of the broadcast media until the onset of Covid-19, when playwrights and producers such as Latif Abubakar and James Ebo Whyte identified the digital platforms as an opportunity to reach out to their audiences. Performances were staged by these producers to a limited number of invited audiences under strict Covid-19 protocols, whilst at the same time transmitting on TV and livestreaming to remote audiences. The response was good, due to the availability of modern technology. Nonetheless, when the Covid-19 restrictions were partially lifted in the last quarter of 2021, and performances were staged at the National Theatre, the 1500-capacity auditorium was always full. At the same time, the performances attracted even more pay-per-view remote audiences. The live audiences cited the authenticity of sharing the same space and time with the performers in flesh and blood, and the excitement of socialisation as their preference for the live theatre.

On the other hand, the remote audience explained that the convenience of seeing the performers clearly from different camera angles and image sizes, and hearing clear sound, for them was more enjoyable, and economical. This shows the mutualistic relationship that has come to be established between live and mediated theatre for the thriving of both, since both now work hand in hand. McCarthy et al. (2001) corroborate this view when they argue, In spite of the fact that consumption of the performing arts is sometimes equated with attending a performance, people can in fact experience the performing arts in several different ways. They explored the different ways people consume theatre and how and why they choose to consume the arts the way they do.

According to them, some people may be directly involved in a “hands-on” way by playing an instrument or singing in a choir. For others, consumption means attending a live performance. Still others listen to a recording or watch a television play. These different forms of involvement are important because the empirical literature demonstrates that the level of demand for the performing arts differs, often dramatically, depending upon the art form and how individuals choose to experience it. They then conclude that “Indeed, consumption of the performing arts through the media are more prevalent than attendance at live performances, and many more people participate through their attendance than by engaging in the arts in a hands-on manner” (McCarthy et al., 2001).

Theatre practitioners think that perhaps this shows the commencement of another phase of the development in live theatre in Ghana that needs to be explored to the advantage of live theatre, since technology has come to influence not only how theatre is produced, but also how it is consumed. Thus, the ubiquity and popularity of digital devices may be considered as directly related to the consumption patterns of theatre patrons across the country.

Similarly, Chapple (2008) postulates that “if theatre is to gain access to a new generation of spectators and not become the string quartet of the 21st century, then it must define its relationship to the other media in terms of openness and productive exchange” for its survival. This offers a symbiotic relationship between theatre and the media. Thus, in some way, theatre has created a range of content for the media, whilst, on the other hand, the media has created a channel for theatre to transmit its products. This has led to a mutual coexistence, which will be difficult to disregard.

However, some respondents held the view that the relationship between live and mediated theatre is parasitic. That is to say that mediated theatre is rather a parasite on live theatre for its survival or growth, without offering anything commensurate in return, which, for one respondent, is not fair. He argued that apart from relying on live performance as the main element of its content, the media also drains live theatre of its talent, without offering any commensurate return. Therefore, he considered mediated theatre as a threat to live theatre:

The media kind of usurps the talents from the theatre without necessarily giving theatre that light, you know, you look at the media, you're looking at actors and actresses, and they're even behaving as if they forget that they were once on stage.... So it's like the media are always waiting for the best talents and they know that TV has become something that is more projecting than the stage. So then, you prepare them and then they pick your best and they take them then you have to start paying someone else. So it's like we have lost so much at the theatre level, on the stage level, at the live theatre level. So it's like the media has become this parasite that is not sharing that limelight with stage actors who are equally good.

Another respondent who considered the relationship between live and mediated theatre as parasitic, first described mediated theatre as the dividend of live theatre. He insisted that it is a secondary version of the live theatre, and that mediated theatre is the dividend of live theatre because before you can do mediated theatre, you have to perform it live. "So, there is no way it can exist on its own. It is like a parasite. The mediated theatre parasites on live theatre." He concluded.

Drawing from the concept of an epiphyte in plant biology, this finding supports the parasitism relationship where one of the species, that is the parasite, benefits from the host species to affect its growth or survival. In this case, mediated theatre is seen to draw its strength and survival from the activities of live theatre. That is, without the activities of live theatre, the survival of mediated theatre becomes futile.

One symbiotic relationship that did not particularly get any direct mention by the respondents is Commensalism, the symbiosis in which the epiphyte derives some benefits from the host tree, without necessarily benefiting or harming it. In this case, the effect of the relationship on the host is neutral. This is not surprising because commensalism comes across as the rarest kind of symbiosis. Hardly will there be any relationship in which one party will not be affected at all. Therefore, the notion that the relationship between live and mediated theatre can be such that one will benefit and the other will not be affected may not readily come to mind. The responses in this study that sought to indicate that there will be a neutral effect had to do with whether the development of media technology will affect live theatre. The question had more to do with an intermedial, rather than a symbiotic, relationship. To that end, some of the respondents said that they did not think media technology would affect theatre in any way.

5. Conclusion

The focus of this study was on the relationship between live and mediated theatre in Ghana. To achieve the objective of the study, which was to explore the symbiotic relationship between live and mediated theatre in Ghana, the concept of the epiphyte. Field visits were undertaken to the Aburi and Legon Botanical gardens to identify and study the phenomenon. Observation (participant and non-participant) was carried out during rehearsals and actual performances at various locations and venues, including the National Theatre in Accra, the Efua Sutherland drama studio at Legon, Dwaberem at the Kumasi Cultural Centre and the University of Education, Winneba. A total of twenty-five respondents, made up of theatre practitioners, theatre scholars, media practitioners, theatre audiences (both live and mediated) and a plant and environmental biologist, were interviewed, face-to-face or via telephone, to elicit their views on the symbiotic relationship between the live and mediated theatre. In the end, it came out that the dominant view on the relationship between live and mediated theatre in Ghana is that it is a complementary relationship, even though some respondents advanced equally strong arguments to the effect that mediated theatre is a parasite that derives its most important ingredient (content) from live theatre, without giving back. This category of respondents insisted that it is a parasitic relationship. Of the three basic concepts in which the symbiosis can manifest, the one that did not find space in the interview responses was commensalism, which was not surprising, because there is hardly a relationship in which one of the two organisms live together and the effect on one party will be neutral. The study concludes that if live theatre is to continue as the hypermedium it has been known to be, then it must open up to and take advantage of mediated theatre to reach more audiences. In this way, a viable theatre

industry will emerge in Ghana, that will attract the attention of the main stakeholders, and hence the needed investments for the growth and development of the performing arts in the country.

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