



MEDIA RELEASE: For immediate release

12 November 2012

## 121212 UpStage Festival Schedule Announced

Step into a world where you can experience 36 unique performances from around the world, all from the comfort of your home.

More than 100 artists have produced works for the **121212 Upstage Festival of Cyberformance** – an international festival of innovative live online performance from 5-12 December. The schedule for the festival is now available online at [www.upstage.org.nz](http://www.upstage.org.nz), with time converter links to find your local time for each show.

Attending the **121212 UpStage Festival of Cyberformance** is completely free and accessible via a standard internet connection and browser; audiences join by simply clicking a link on the schedule page at the time of each live performance.

The annual festival, now in its sixth year, is organised by artists Vicki Smith and Helen Varley Jamieson, with a team of dedicated volunteers in New Zealand and around the world – online meetings of the team cross multiple timezones and languages.

"The festival is unique," says festival architect Helen Varley Jamieson. "Where else could you bring together multi-national groups performing live from all corners of the world for a global audience? It breaks down the barriers of time and distance. Many of the groups have members from different countries who have never met in person."

Alongside the online access, the UpStage Festival of Cyberformance includes "real life access nodes" in 14 locations around the world from Wellington to Buenos Aires, Munich and Coimbra (Portugal).

Festival architect Vicki Smith says the access nodes provide opportunities for groups of people to gather locally and experience the performances together as part of the global audience.

"The Physics Room in Christchurch will project festival performances as part of their programme, in Wellington there will be an outdoor screening in the CBD, while in Coimbra, the performances will be projected onto the outside of a theatre building, and in Buenos Aires, a large outdoor screening will operate for the entire programme in 12 December."

**121212 Upstage Festival of Cyberformance** is in two parts: **Walking Backwards Into The Future**, a retrospective of 17 shows from past festivals from 5-11 December; and **Testing 1 2, 1 2, 1 2**, 19 new live performances premiering on Wednesday 12 December (and parts of December 11 or December 13 depending on your timezone).

The festival opens on Wednesday 5 December with a performance by Avatar Body *Collision*, the globally dispersed cyberformance troupe who founded UpStage in 2003. They reform for this year's festival to remount their performance from the first festival in 2007, a cyberformance rendition of Samuel Beckett's *Come and Go*.

"It's an exercise in reproducing as faithfully as possible Samuel Beckett's precise stage directions and script, in the online environment," says Vicki Smith who is part of Body Avatar *Collision* along with Helen, Karla Ptacek (United Kingdom) and Leena Saarinen (Finland).

Other highlights from past festivals include *Baba Yaga*, an adaptation of a traditional Russian fairy story; *RxEgo-go*, featuring performers from the USA, Serbia and Australia who explore

the role of medi(c)ation in a symptomatised, technologised society; *Murder 2.0* (Canada), a suspense-filled interactive detective story, where each audience member gets a different version of the story depending on the clues they find along the way; and *Flat Earth* (Netherlands/Italy), a poetic journey on the source of ideas, and how we build ideas from images that come in our mind.

**Testing 1 2 1 2 1 2** begins at 11am New Zealand time on Wednesday 12 December (Tuesday 11 December 11pm for Central Europe) with 20-minute cyberperformances beginning every half hour until 2pm Thursday 13 December (NZ time); three short breaks during the programme give the organisers and artists a chance to rest.

Opening the 27-hour cyberperformance marathon will be shows by students from schools in remote areas of New Zealand. The students have been working online with Vicki Smith to develop their performances.

"Students from the Chatham Islands and the South Island's West Coast have been engaged in a project about performing story online using UpStage. They are learning through the performance platform as well as other online collaborative tools."

Three performances will take place in the virtual world Second Life, while an Argentinian inter-disciplinary group has created the piece *Since the End of the World* which projects a 3D image into the performance platform Waterwheel. Audiences for this show are recommended to make or buy 3D glasses for the full 3D experience! *Netcompositions* by Waikato University musician and associate professor Ian Whalley leverages high end communication technology in two audio visual works with performers in Australia and China.

Wellingtonian Dan James (known online as Dan Untitled), who has been involved with UpStage since 2005 as a performer and curator, said that UpStage appeals because of its element of community. "It is a platform that enables people from all sorts of cultural backgrounds to easily interact with one another in real-time and share ideas, approaches and stories.

"People from all sorts of artistic backgrounds have found their way there – visual artists, theatre people, musicians, DJs, VJs and animators."

Dan described UpStage as a blank stage and said that new audience members should "expect the unexpected. Someone might jump up onto that stage and tell their own true-to-life story, but then the next person might act out a fictional narrative, the next person might mix together some music, and the next person might create drawings.

"With cyberperformance, the performers perform by controlling avatars that visually represent characters, playing sounds and 'talking' with the real-time text chat dialogue. The key thing for an audience member is the interactivity – you can type comments and they come up in real-time. The audiences are in all sorts of places and timezones too.

"Audience members can ask questions, they can heckle, they sometimes even invent new personae in response to what they are seeing and hearing, and make comments 'in character'. The more that you engage with what you see and hear, the more you will get out of the experience."

**121212 Upstage Festival of Cyberformance** takes place from 5-12 December. Find out more about the festival, including the full schedule and information about each show, node locations and hours by visiting [www.upstage.org.nz](http://www.upstage.org.nz) or email [info@upstage.org.nz](mailto:info@upstage.org.nz). During the festival, the website becomes the hub, providing time converters and links for audience members to access the stages, platforms or streams of each performance.

---

ENDS

Media Enquiries: Sally Woodfield | SWPR | 021 868 020 | [sally@swpr.co.nz](mailto:sally@swpr.co.nz)

