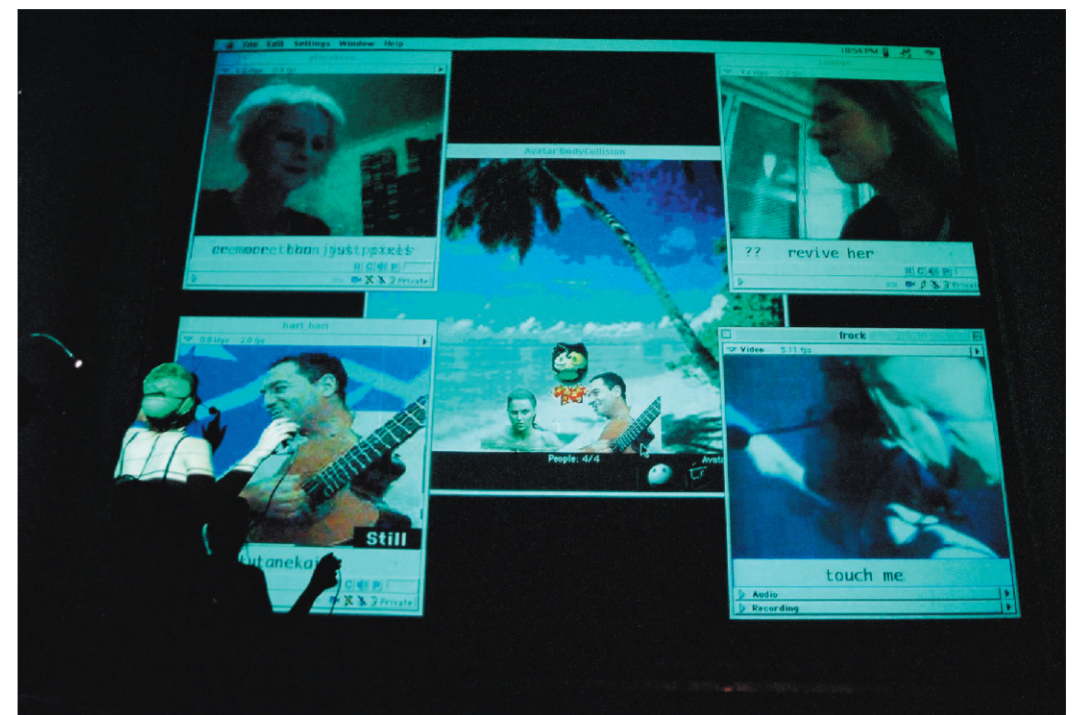


# The idea for UpStage grew out of the work of cyberperformance troupe *Avatar Body Collision*.

Helen Varley Jamieson and Vicki Smith (Aotearoa/NZ), Karla Ptacek (UK) and Leena Saarinen (Finland) have been making live theatrical performances on the internet since 2001, using free chat software with web cams and graphical avatars. They began to dream of an application that could combine the best features of the softwares they were using in a single, purpose-built and accessible interface.



*swim - an exercise in remote intimacy*, by Avatar Body Collision  
Galerija Kapelica, Ljubljana 2003; photograph by Nada Zgank



*Lagging With the Lololols*, by Avatar Body Collision  
Virtual Minds Congress, Bremen, 2004

In 2003, with a grant from the New Zealand government, they were able to employ programmer and artist Douglas Bagnall to build the first version of UpStage, which was launched in January 2004. UpStage began to be used by people all over the world, as well as by Avatar Body Collision.

UpStage V2 was released in 2007, thanks to a grant from the Community Partnership Fund of the New Zealand government's Digital Strategy. Students at Auckland University of Technology continue to develop the software along with volunteer open source programmers, and annual festivals feature performances by many artists.



*Come & Go* by Samuel Beckett, performed by Avatar Body Collision in UpStage  
070707 UpStage Festival, 2007

[www.avatarbodycollision.org](http://www.avatarbodycollision.org)

