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Android Actors and Artificial Authors: Re-Imagining Theatre in the Algorithmic Age

This paper aims to evaluate two seemingly different but overlapping theatrical approaches, namely Oriza Hirata's "robot theatre" and Annie Dorsen's "algorithmic theatre." Juxtaposing Dorsen's and Hirata's approaches to acting, drama and the performing arts allows us to interrogate their shared philosophical underpinnings. Both Hirata's and Dorsen's theatrical projects expose and critically engage with the desire to anthropomorphize robots/machines. Their work reminds us that theatre does not need to be imagined as a territory that solely belongs to the human. This poses a challenge not only to the *act* of acting, but also to spectating. Hirata's robots/androids and Dorsen's algorithms act and interact with human actors, complicating the putative difference between them. Accordingly, they also play with spectatorial expectation. Both directors remodel the dramatic stage as a locus for the exploration of inhuman potential. The dramatic effects their plays achieve, thus, disturb traditional meaning-making processes, soliciting self-commentary on the nature of their own dramatizability. Both playwrights' unique approaches to theatre and the performing arts necessarily generate philosophical questions. How does their limitation of anthropocentric positionality and simultaneous initiation of robotic/algorithmic potentiality allow us to re-imagine theatre in the algorithmic age?