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**RESEARCH**

# Screened Live: Technologically Reconfiguring Notions of the Author

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The dramatic tradition suggests, for the most part, a progressive relationship between author, performer, producer and audience, in which the author/s originates the playtext, the performers develop a production, and the producer presents the outcome to the public. The arrival of theatrical performance and the fine art exhibition on cinema screens worldwide, the phenomenon of 'live relay' or the 'as live broadcast' in the arts, challenges this familiar perception of the author/production/audience relationship. The emergence of screening live performances in cinemas has modulated the once-traditional dramaturgical interaction between text, production, and audience. The 'live relay' tests the very way we think about theatre and performance. With its destabilization of production and audience spatio-temporal locators, the 'live relay' disrupts the vocabulary of theatrical description and it inflects both ontological and epistemological attitudes to the theatre-viewing of the past, the theatre-making of the present, and the interactions thereof. The live relay, moreover, causes disturbances within what can be considered the authorial field. If postdramatic theatre shifts the dramaturgical valency from playwright as creative genius to director as auteur, then the mediaturgy of the 'live relay' renders both of these models redundant. This article examines the proposition that the live relay has given rise to new authorial voices and bodies, those of the cinematic director and the institution. These are bodies and voices that need to be accommodated within the mediated and intermedial paradigm of screening live performance in cinema.

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**Keywords:** Author; technology; live relay; screening live events

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National Theatre Live: Experience the best of British theatre at a cinema near you.

Branagh Theatre Live: in partnership with Picturehouse Entertainment, will broadcast three productions of its year-long 'Plays at the Garrick' season live to cinemas worldwide.

RSC: Live from Stratford Upon Avon – 'Made in Stratford-upon-Avon, seen around the world.'<sup>1</sup>

The transmedial and intermedial phenomenon that is the live relay<sup>2</sup> of arts events to cinema and television screens around the world challenges certain performance norms from both sides of the footlights, both sides of the camera. Firstly, this twenty-first century mode of theatrical presentation disturbs the traditional linear progression of the production of dramatic, or text-based, theatre. Secondly, with the live *relay* being both transmedial and intermedial, it complicates how we speak about live *theatre*. Thirdly, within the epistemological and ontological quagmire of remediated uncertainty that is the live relay, notions of authorship become unstable. With reference to this third point, I argue that the evolution of the live relay has given rise to two new forms of authorship: the first being where the 'author function' resides in an actor-manager model and the second where the 'author function' resides in a producing institution model. For the actor-manager model, I draw on the instance of Kenneth Branagh and the Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company 'Plays at the Garrick' season. For the producing-institution model, I draw on the National Theatre of Great Britain and its National Theatre Live project.

The article, effectively, consists of three sections: questions of *what* is being authored and for *whom*, gives rise to *who* is the author. I do spend some time on the

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes 'shared around the world' as per the 27/02/2016 incarnation of website; cf. [http://www.boneaubryanbrown.com/show/Royal\\_Shakespeare\\_Company's\\_Live\\_from\\_Stratford-upon-Avon](http://www.boneaubryanbrown.com/show/Royal_Shakespeare_Company's_Live_from_Stratford-upon-Avon) and <http://light-house.co.uk/calendar/2013/07/rsc-live-from-stratford-upon-avon-richard-ii/>.

<sup>2</sup> For use of the phrase 'live relay' see Bernadette Cochrane and Frances Bonner (2014), and Richard Fotheringham (2016).

*what* and the *whom*, because at the core of the live relay there is, as Stephen Purcell puts it a 'simultaneous privileging and troubling of physical presence as a signifier of theatrical authenticity' (2014: 212). The questions of presence and authenticity run as underlying themes through the article.

### **The Live Relay: The What**

For audiences, the transmission of theatre productions to cinemas around the world has become part of the cultural norm of the twentieth-first century. For theatre companies such as the National Theatre of Great Britain and the Royal Shakespeare Company, their performative scope has expanded to reach not just national audiences but international ones. The initial concerns, apropos audience cannibalisation, of the Met, the NT, and the Major Performing Arts companies of Australia have been largely unrealised (Bakhshi and Throsby 2014; Fotheringham 2016; cf. Tommasini 2013; Midgette 2016). Indeed, in the case of NT Live and audience attendance, Hasan Bakhshi and David Throsby (2014: 7) found that live screenings are complimentary rather than substitutional. While the focus here is on the theatrical stage to screen paradigm, it is worth noting that opera, ballet, art exhibitions, and interviews with authors such as Margaret Atwood feature significantly in this addition to the cultural landscape. Within the various offerings incorporate within event cinema, as the broader cultural phenomenon is sometimes known, the majority of my argument in this section on the National Theatre of Great Britain's 'National Theatre Live' model (or as it is sometimes referred to NT Live). The emphasis on National Theatre Live is for three reasons. The first of these is that while there are, now, several producing models for the live relay, National Theatre Live is, to paraphrase Stephen Daldry and Robin Lough, one of the most 'live live' models, in that it is shown in real time to the first cinema audience (Henderson 2014). The second is that the National both generates and owns, for the most part, the contents of National Theatre Live. The third reason relates to longevity and volume. The National was the first theatre company to offer a sustained program of screened theatrical events in cinemas. Since the 2009 experiment of Racine's *Phèdre*, National Theatre Live is streamed to 65 countries and 2,0000 venues around the world with only 700 of those in the UK. Since National Live

began in 2009, the worldwide audience for National Theatre Live is over 5.3 million. In 2017–18, '1.2 million people watched NT Live broadcasts around the world – 628,324 people in the UK, and 563,975 internationally' (National Theatre *Annual Review* 2017/2018). In 2017–18, 6% of the income of the National Theatre came from the NT Live and Digital division (National Theatre *Annual Review* 2017/2018).

### **The disturbance of the linear progression**

Content generation, and volume, notwithstanding, in theatrical terms, the live relay challenges the conventional, linear progression of the presentation of live dramatic, or text-based, theatre. In broad brushstrokes, this progression can be understood as the author writes the play, the creative team and the performers develop the production, and the producer of said production presents the outcome to an audience. Each of these elements in the continuum constitute aspects of authorship anticipated at the outset by the playwright and are to a greater or lesser degree accounted for within the creation of the playtext itself. These layers of authorship are interdependent within the functional whole of theatrical presentation. They are, however, invisible to the audience member who sees the production as presented on the stage and accepts the final manifestation as the authored work in totality. It is, therefore, the work, at the level of reception, that, for the most part, defines for the audience the visible identity of authorship.

As Philip Auslander acknowledges, '*the default* definition of live performance is that kind of performance in which the performers and the audience are physically and temporally co-present to one another' (2012: 5). Co-presence may well remain the default position, but it is by no means the only position. To the presentational model, as outlined, we can now add the live relay: the transmission of the live performance to cinema which, depending on the spatio-temporal location of the audience, can be positioned at various points on the presentational continuum. These points can be understood as the *simultaneous* (cinema audiences watching the theatrical performance at the same time as the theatrical audience; the *delayed* (cinema audiences watching the theatrical 'film' at a later date and but on its first showing), and the *encore* (repeat screenings of the original film). These variant

positions, singular and plural, are created by the transmedial and intermedial object that is the cinematic version of the live theatrical performance.

The cinematic process starts towards the end of the theatrical rehearsal period.

Lough describes this phase as:

It will quickly become apparent how many cameras are needed and whether or not any special equipment is required like camera dollies for tracking shots or a camera crane for vertical movement or a high-angle viewpoint,' [...] The multi-camera director then sits down with a copy of the script and begins to write his "camera script". This involves choosing the framing and duration of each shot, including any movement required, and then assigning that shot to a speech, a line or simply a word or a facial reaction. [...] alongside the shots that the cameramen are given from the "camera script", some cinematic values are added to a stream. "A crane shot or a gentle track can greatly enhance the drama as long as it is done subtly". The cinema audience [shouldn't notice] 'how the transformation to screen is taking place'. (Sandwell, Lough, and Sabel 2012)

Camera dollies, tracking shots, camera cranes, shot framing, number of shots (Sometimes more than 1000. For example, there were 1500 camera moves for *The Magistrate* (2012)), cinematic values, this is the language of film. The cinematic production team, some 80 strong, 'has two dry runs – filming the actors performing without an audience – to work out the best camera positions, and to perfect the lighting and sound' and to quote Mathew Bell (2012). These dry runs are then watched in a cinema and the 'camera script' finalized. There is a final dress rehearsal, complete with the added cinematic values, one of which is to the obligatory shots of the theatre audience: 'Generally, NT Live streams won't feature the audience [...] with the live aspect underlined with the streams opening with shots of the theatre audience arriving' (Sandwell, Lough, and Sabel 2012). More recently, and as seen with the collaboration between National Theatre Live with Sonia Friedman Productions

and Fox Stage Productions of Ivo Van Hove's *All About Eve* (2019), audience shots are included as part of the opening and closing moments of the production proper (National Theatre *All About Eve* 2019). The function of these audience shots should not be under-estimated. The shots of the theatre audience are part of the apparatus that contributes to the paratextual aesthetics or framing of the cinematic object. These paratextual aesthetics are directly related to the question of authorship. Firstly, these audience shots validate the theatrical origins of the cinematic object. Secondly, the theatre director or directors will have directed or authored the production with a conceptual theatre audience in mind. In a parallel manoeuvre, therefore, these paratextual images create a corresponding relationship between the cinema director and the conceptual cinema audience.

### **Audiences: For Whom?**

To return to the transmission process, the event is then simultaneously narrowcast from the theatre to participating cinemas, where the cinema audience can, notionally, view the self-same performance as the theatre audience. It is notional because it becomes evident that the two different audiences are, in fact, watching two different events. The theatre audience, surrounded by cameras and cinematic paraphernalia, is watching a theatre production being filmed. The cinema audience is watching the result of that theatre production being filmed. Nicholas Hytner, the previous Artistic Director of the National, David Sabel, erstwhile Executive Producer of National Theatre Live, and Lough are adamant that they are 'filming a stage performance, not making a movie' (Sandwell, Lough, and Sabel 2012). While people such as John Wyver may consider this position to be 'unnecessarily essentialist' (this from a slightly heated blogging exchange between Wyver (2010) and Chris Goode (2010), when one is encountering an object that is created with multiple cameras, complete with accommodation of angles, shots, emendations to the productions, and 'cinematic values' added, which is then transferred to a cinema screen, then, Hytner's assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, it is necessary to consider that what is being seen in the cinema is, in fact, 'a movie'. If, moreover, as Chiel Kattenbelt argues, 'time and space are still the two main dimensions by which we distinguish media

from each other and determine their specificity' and that 'such a determination of [this] specificity [...] is usually related to their materiality' (2008: 22), then with the live relay, there are two different media operating simultaneously: the theatrical and the cinematic. The two events may be working in tandem temporally, but they are separated spatially. The two audiences are experiencing different materialities; there are two different ontological entities coexisting within the standard presentational continuum, carrying the implication of there being two different authors.

With the delayed and encore points on the aforementioned presentational continuum, the difference between these materialities becomes accentuated. This section begins by considering notions of ephemerality or transitory existence. Theatre and cinema, both being temporal art-forms share certain commonalities vis-à-vis ephemerality. For both the theatre audience and the cinema audience, the single event, performance or a screening, is ephemeral. There are differences apropos materiality, but both experiences are ephemeral in that both are temporally finite. The difference between the two materialities lies in the notion of reproducibility, which is where we need to consider the performance continuum. Each individual performance of a production is unique. Each audience brings its own response patterns. There is the audience that will laugh at the slightest instigation and another that will sit in intent silence seeking out every shred of signification or perhaps being just plain bored. The professional company of actors will quickly learn its audience on a performance by performance basis and timing will be adjusted accordingly; never the same twice. The remounted production, perhaps months or years later, will carry forward the structure of the original, often in considerable detail. It will not, however, necessarily replicate certain essential presentational attributes such as, for example, casting. Cast changes will reconfigure the mimetic dynamics of the performance for participants on both sides of the theatrical paradigm. Nonetheless, for the most part, once a theatrical production has finished its run, there isn't the same expectation that that particular production can be revisited in the way that one might be able to return to a film. The relationship between author and audience, theatrically speaking, is more ephemeral than the parallel relationship between the cinematic author and audience.



## Live theatre or live Film?

On live performance, and as part of the notorious exchange with Auslander, Peggy Phelan stated: 'Performance's only life is in the present. [...] To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology' (1993: 146). Part of the so-called essentialism of live theatre is that the event is ephemeral. It is finite both temporally and spatially. The transience of the production or the performance is, in part, what makes theatre 'theatre': the performers and the audience physically and temporally co-present to one another', sharing the action of the production in real-time, and only available for the duration of the run of the production. If you aren't there, you don't share. Or as Stephen Purcell puts it apropos 'Be there', the strapline of Digital Theatre, 'one would assume [...] that the main reason for purchasing one of Digital's productions is that one could not 'be there' (2014: 212). To return to National Theatre Live and the aforementioned traditional presentational continuum, using the film created for the simultaneous event, the delayed event is for those audiences who are remote in both time and space – those who, more often than not, 'could not 'be there'. As was seen with the epigraphs at the beginning of the article, both Branagh Theatre Live and RSC Live from Stratford Upon Avon both make it explicit that screenings of the production take place worldwide. As for National Theatre Live, it is the theatrical first mover, 'in that they "gained a competitive advantage through capturing new demand or through control of resources' in the event cinema market both nationally and internationally (Atkinson 2016: 136). For example, only productions by the National Theatre of Great Britain featured in the inaugural 2009 season. Over the course of the next six years, National Theatre Live featured productions by the Donmar Warehouse, Complicite and The Royal Court Theatre, among others, all of which have been transmitted around the world. While all of these are British companies, in 2015, National Theatre Live went international with its source material. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, 2015, National Theatre Live presented the live relay of the Broadway production, *Of Mice and Men*. In this instance, the simultaneous live relay did not take place during the official run. The production was filmed at a special performance in front of an invited audience the night after closing night. Here the theatre audience

was used as a paratextual device to signal the 'theatrical authenticity' (Purcell 2014: 212) of the production through their physical presence.

In the initial NT Live model, 'a four-week window was agreed (from the date of the live broadcast), allowing venues to show the screening up to four times. This window was designed primarily for delayed territories where the possibility of 'multiple screenings allowed for a wider distribution'(NESTA). Here we have an indisputable 'economy of reproduction', multiple screenings in multiple locations. But, if these screenings lessen the ontology of the originating performance, and if, as per Hytner, the National Theatre is 'not making a movie', then one must question what is the ontological status of the object that the cinema audience is viewing. The simple answer lies in the slightly reworded introduction that accompanies the National Theatre Live screenings. This is where the presenter announces that audiences around the world are watching the production live or 'almost live'. The cinema audience is, obviously, live, so this must mean the performance, itself, is only 'almost live'; it is a simulacrum, a residue of the original theatrical production.

A more complex response to the ontological condition of the object is embedded in Sabel's address at the 2013 TEDx Broadway event where he stated: 'The really interesting lesson is that we restricted the rights we negotiated to a specific window of the theatrical screenings so that it was in a sense an ephemeral event'. He goes on to claim, apropos National Theatre Live, 'even when it's not live, it still has a residue of being live'. Here Sabel pushes the envelope on performance ephemerality. He also reinforces Purcell's claim apropos the 'simultaneous privileging and troubling of physical presence as a signifier of theatrical authenticity'. In his tacit acknowledgement of both the transience of performance and the cachet of liveness, Sabel reconstitutes the boundaries of what can be considered ephemeral; with this inclusion of the deferred 'almost live' cinematic object, he reconfigures the parameters of the traditional performance continuum.

Encore events are even more remote in time and space. Effectively, these screenings are repeats of the film shown during the simultaneous and the delayed events but occur outside even Sabel's reworked continuum of ephemerality. Here we turn to a personal example to illustrate what is at stake. *Coriolanus*, a production

originating with the Donmar Warehouse in 2014 and shown under the banner of NT Live, in February 2016 was being promoted as 'return[ing] by popular demand'. With *Coriolanus*, no longer, is the National Theatre producing content by the National for the National. They have become the producer. International Encore screenings in the UK began on the 24th of September 2016 with international screenings starting on the 12th of November 2016. I didn't see the live production. I didn't see the simultaneous event; I didn't see the delayed event, but one of my two local cinemas that regularly screen National Theatre Live, was showing the film on the 12th of December. (Had I not been in the UK, I would have been somewhat tempted to watch both it and the Ralf Fiennes 2011 film on the same day, albeit one was in the cinema and the other needed to be streamed to my home.) With the original Donmar production occurring in 2014, and the 'encore by popular demand' occurring in 2016, *Coriolanus*, if we are to consider it an 'almost live' version of the production, most certainly stretches the presentational continuum well beyond the life of the live theatre event. The same could be said of the re-release of Kenneth Branagh's 2015 *The Winter's Tale* in cinemas around the world on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, 2019. In either instance, any sense of the 'ephemeral event', to return to Sabel, has been all but lost. For the encore audience, who can only access the 'residue' of the original performance, do they discuss the object viewed as theatre or as cinema? The two things do, after all, require two different linguistic and conceptual competencies.

In all the instances discussed, the theatrical experience is, via 'a media change' or 'transfer[ence] from one medium to another' (Kattenbelt 2008: 20), mimicked, but only mimicked, in the cinema experience. If as Kattenbelt argues, 'theatre on film and theatre on television [...] is, in its mediatized form, no longer theatre but respectively film or television' then they are at 'most a representation of theatre' (2008: 22–3), which returns us to notions of residue and simulacrum, 'a thing having the appearance but not the substance or proper qualities of something' (OED). A screen image is and can only be a simulacrum except where it constitutes an abstract image unique to itself, or where it contributes to the diegetic entity of a cinema production. Action screened at a geographical remove, albeit simultaneous with its origin is a simulacrum. Action screened at a geographical and temporal remove is

most definitely a simulacrum. With the live relay morphing into a film which can be delayed or reshowed at the convenience of the theatrical producer and availability of the cinema chain, audiences distant in time and place are no longer bound by the traditional performance continuum.

### **Authorship: By Whom?**

The film or live relay of the stage production is now an integral part of the performance continuum; it is an accepted part of the theatrical landscape. Audiences do have conversations about which screening they will attend, or whether they will catch-up on a previously missed event, regardless of their geographical and temporal proximity to the originating event. If postdramatic theatre shifts the dramaturgical valency of playwright as creative genius to director as auteur, then the mediaturgy of the live relay renders both of these models redundant. Such an observation then leads to questions of who is or are the author/s of this addition to the performance continuum or where is the author function located? The term 'author function' is used in the Foucauldian sense with the actor-manager model and the producing institution model, both being instances of the 'relationship between text and author, the manner in which a text apparently points to this "figure" that, at least in appearance, is outside and antecedes it' (Foucault 1969: 141). To rework Foucault, 'the author function is characteristic of the mode of existence', with the author function residing both the actor-manager model and the live relay being the mode of existence in question. The somewhat counterintuitive claim that the relationship between the text, or the live relay in this instance, gives rise to two different authors can be reconciled via notions of authorial agency.

As Jonathan Gray has observed, 'authorship is about authority, power, and meaning' (2013: 107). The focus here is the first two of Gray's qualities, that is authority and power, for as will be seen, both of these qualities converge in notions of trust. Ingo Berensmeyer, Gert Buelens, and Marysa Demoor have argued for understanding authorial agency as being historically oscillating between 'strong' or 'autonomous' models an alternative, or, 'weak' or 'heteronomous' models (2012: 8). At the core of the autonomous model lies the concept of the solo genius. By

contrast, the heteronomous model, particularly in the instance of the digital realm, is produced by 'cultural networks and their acts of authorization' (Berensmeyer, Buelens, Demoor 2012: 8). While the aforementioned actor-manager model would seem to sit at the 'strong' end of the continuum and the producing institution at the weak, I argue that both are instantiations of 'strong' authorship.

The theatre director has long been recognized as an author, for as Simon Shepherd observes, 'every decision made by a director is a form authoring' (2012). But, when it comes to questions of the author, and particularly authorship in the digital sphere, it is difficult to disagree with Jonathon Gray's argument that any theory of 'authorship that does not wish to trip over its own shoelaces must first come to terms with the profound multiplication of authorship' (2013: 92). With the live relay, this multiplicity of authorship allows two new authorial forms to emerge or in the case of the actor-manager model, allows an older authorial form to re-emerge alongside the institution-as-author model. In both instances, the author function resolves around questions of authority, power, and trust, which are, in turn, attributes of creative agency.

The authority and power of the actor-manager loom large over eighteen- and nineteenth-century English theatre. The model allowed the actor concerned to select the plays (usually starring in them), choose the permanent company, manage the finances of the company, and often to take over the management of a theatre. As Dennis Kennedy puts it:

The actor-manager would find and supervise the capital, take the risks and reap the rewards. The concept of the "director" (or "producer", as he would soon be called) as a functionary separate from the actors or playwright was unknown in Britain until after 1900. The actor-manager wielded the power of the director [...] and much more besides. He had to be an engaging or even charismatic performer, a businessman, a leader of personnel, a cultural touchstone and popular as a person with audiences all at once. (2004: 6)

There are several contributing factors to the demise of the actor-manager, not the least of which was 'the disdainful approach taken by modernist reformers, who believed

that far too much of the life of a theatre was dedicated to the ego of the owner' (Kennedy 2004: 6). In terms of theatrical authorship, however, from Colley Cibber and David Garrick in the eighteenth century, Henry Irving, Squire and Effie Bancroft, and Charles Wyndham, in the nineteenth century, and concluding with Laurence Olivier in the twentieth, (and to borrow from Jeffrey Richards' article 'Henry Irving: The Actor-Manager as Auteur' (2005)) it was entirely appropriate that the authorial and authoritative invocation of 'a play by', at the foot of the playbill, contained the name of the actor-manager. For the largely bourgeois audience (Kennedy 2004: 5) that attended these productions, authorial power, trust, and style was embodied in the figure or brand of the named actor-manager.

In terms of event cinema, the figure of the Kenneth Branagh can be added to the above list of actor-managers. By naming his present company The Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company Branagh casts himself in the role of actor-manager. He thereby assumes the authorial rights of authority and power that accrue to that role. It is here attention turns to the trailer for the Branagh Theatre Live season at the Garrick Theatre in London. It is worth noting here that the choice of considering the paratextual material promotional trailers is not incidental to considerations of authorship. As Gray points out, apropos 'clusters of authorship', 'we must ask where audiences first encounter the text. And while the answer to that question will vary, it will nearly always involve paratexts' (2013: 102). He goes on to note the importance of paratexts, such as promotional trailers, stating 'power and value often begin with the paratexts, as they often establish [...] identificatory possibilities sometimes long before we have encountered them in "the text itself"' (2013: 102). To return to the trailer for Kenneth Brannagh Live, the opening sequence shows a wintery evening London. It includes the name of the theatre – the Garrick. There the highly-stylized promotional clips for *Romeo and Juliet* (2016), *The Entertainer* (2016), and *The Winter's Tale* (2015).<sup>3</sup> The mise-en-scène of each of the productions highlighted is

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<sup>3</sup> The Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company presented five productions at the Garrick Theatre over 2015 and 2016. The season included a double-bill of *Harlequinade* and *All on Her Own, Red Velvet, The Painkiller*, and *The Entertainer*. Branagh starred in *The Entertainer*, performed in and co-directed *Harlequinade*, and directed the remainder of the season. *The Winter's Tale*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Entertainer* were selected for the live relay in partnership with Picturehouse Entertainment.

backstage. The name and figure of Branagh feature throughout. Here, Branagh seems to be overtly harking back to the actor-manager tradition; he has, and as Michael Billington puts it, 'a strong sense of the theatrical past' (2015). While it is an image of the new Garrick theatre and only named after David Garrick, and while it *may* be the case that it was the only West End theatre available to Branagh for his five-play season, the trailer provides a link between one of the most famous of the historical actor-managers and the recent occupier. The production choices themselves, most notably with *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Entertainer*, hark back to the last major actor-manager, Lawrence Olivier. The backstage sequences validate the theatrical origins of the cinematic object. Kenneth Branagh is the star of both *The Entertainer* and *The Winter's Tale*. The latter also featuring the cultural touchstone and long-time collaborator, Judi Dench. The name Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company features in the closing images while the voiceover encourages potential audiences to book their tickets now at [BranaghTheatreLive.com](http://BranaghTheatreLive.com). While it doesn't contain audience footage, the Encore screening did. Apropos the promotional trailer, as actor, director, and producer, the figure of Branagh features throughout.

Branagh has found the financial capital. Branagh is the director, not just of the season but of some of the productions. Branagh is the performer, the leader of personnel. Branagh has effectively become 'a cultural touchstone'. His reputation and his trust that we, the audience – theatrical and cinematic, be that simultaneous, delayed, or encore – trust his name and his brand, means that he has assumed the 'author function' for Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company, Plays at the Garrick Live. Branagh is the brand. If Berensmeyer, Buelens, and Demoor's argument vis-à-vis authorial agency oscillating from 'strong' or 'autonomous' to 'weak' or 'heteronomous' is accepted then, given Branagh has autonomous agency, creative control, and intellectual ownership, these attributes position him towards the 'strong' end of the authorial oscillation.

By contrast, the National Theatre Live, which consists of networks – they now present the work of other theatres both nationally and internationally, and they downplay the role of the theatrical director in favour of the brand – should be positioned at the weak point of Berensmeyer's, Buelens', and Demoor's oscillation.

In a parallel manoeuvre to Kenneth Branagh Live, here the promotional trailer, the 'National Theatre Live: the story so far' is scrutinized. The trailer opens with evening shots of London before showing the National Theatre building. From there, it moves to a wide-shot of an Olivier Theatre audience, which is followed by a backstage shot of an actor having their costume adjusted. The trailer then shifts to a series of shots highlighting the cinematic process. The featured productions include not only productions by the National Theatre but also *John* by DV8 (2014) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* by the Young Vic Theatre (2014). The promotional trailer highlights the institution, its core business, and its networks.

In terms of paratextual aesthetics, the two promotional videos have several similarities. There are the obligatory shots of both London and the theatre. We had the obligatory shot of the audience. While the Branagh promotional video used the device of backstage for its theatrical credentials, for the National Theatre of Great Britain, the word 'theatre' and the productions contextualized the highlighting of the cinematic process, whilst providing the requisite theatrical credentials.

Unlike the Branagh model though, with National Theatre Live, there is seldom mention of an 'author' or a 'director', although the latter appears in the credits at the end of the film. Here the authorial function is subsumed into the importance of positioning the content under the banner of National Theatre Live. Here, the National Theatre of Great Britain has found the financial capital to underwrite the phenomenon. The National Theatre of Great Britain is 'the leader of personnel'. National Theatre of Great Britain has effectively become 'a cultural touchstone'. The reputation of the National Theatre of Great Britain and their trust that we, the audience – theatrical and cinematic, be that simultaneous, delayed, or encore – trust their name and their brand, means that the National Theatre of Great Britain has assumed the 'author function' for National Theatre Live. In a reversion to Sarah Atkinson's observation apropos the National Theatre of Great Britain being a technological first mover, the strength of the brand, National Theatre Live, renders it so identifiable that, rather than being perceived as a network, as an entity, it becomes a singularity. It is a singularity that is more akin to the individuality of Branagh, complete with autonomous agency, creative control, and intellectual



ownership, and thus, like the Kenneth Branagh Theatre Company, with NT Live, the National Theatre of Great Britain too is positioned at the 'strong' end of the authorial oscillation.

## Conclusion

Residue, simulacrum, co-present or remote, theatre or cinema, the live relay really does invite a reassessment of authorship and the relationship between author and audience. The live relay has interposed itself at the very point of reception, at the very threshold of apprehension, the last step in the traditional theatrical continuum. The screen presentation remodels and redefines the entire theatrical process at precisely the defining moment of delivery, the moment where everything comes together; except that now, the whole performance is reconfigured, rebadged, and redistributed. This is more than simple presentation. Now, the presenter, the producer, and the actor-manager are re-drawing the contract between authorship and audience to an extent hitherto unseen in theatrical history.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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