

## Attention in the Cellular Age: Mobile phones and theatre practice

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Galit Wellner (2015) suggests that we now live in the cellular age. Indeed, the mobile phone has nearly reached a hundred-percent rate of penetration of the global population, it has seeped into virtual and real public spheres as well as private lives (Goggin and Hjorth 2014) and it is often experienced as an extension of the user's identity and indeed the user's body (Fortunati 2014). The use of mobile phones has also been problematized in relation to etiquettes of theatre attendance (Home-Cook 2015; Richardson 2014) and has been connected to a decrease in student academic performance (Lepp et al 2015). Within these discussions, the attention of students as well as theatre audiences is often understood as the prize for which performers and performer trainers have to fight in a battle with the mobile phone. Drawing on a year-long fellowship on the use of mobile phones for the development of digital creativity in performing arts and beyond (University of Leeds), this paper has two interconnected aims. It will first seek to analyse in what ways mobile phone use in theatre practice can become a problem. Based on this analysis, it will argue that an understanding of attention as scarce and disrupted is no longer an adequate explanatory framework. It will rather claim that performer training, and performance in general, offer alternative models of attention that move beyond the focus-distraction divide. Utilising the post-phenomenological concept of multistability (Ihde 1990; Verbeek 2005), this paper will also argue that theatre practice can offer strategies towards appropriating mobile devices for creative purposes. Thus, this paper aims to address two areas of the CfP: the focus on attention economy and the way intermediality can serve as a practice-based research methodology. It is also proposed as part of a shared panel with the Scenography WG.

### Bio

Dr Maria Kapsali is a Lecturer in Physical Performance in the School of Performance and Cultural Industries at the University of Leeds. Her research has appeared in international peer-reviewed journals and she is currently working on a monograph on Technology and Performer Training, to be published by Routledge as part of the *Perspectives on Performer Training* series. She is working on the development of Sonolope, a system of movement sonification, and this has informed her latest article in IJPADM 'Making the Body All Ears' (2017). She is the convenor of the TaPRA Performer Training WG.