



Exploring Performances in Online Spaces

Engagement in Physical and Digital Spaces

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Elise

- CEO, Praxis Labs
- Uses virtual reality for D&I training

Insights

- Expert: First person perspective taking + direct engagement improves overall experience
- Consumer: Felt most connected at smaller gatherings - people are more focused



Initial POV

We met Ace, a young poet, rapper and performer.

We were amazed to realize that they preferred to have audio engagement during a virtual performance even if it was messy and produced a “chaotic good” engagement.

It would be game-changing to have a way to encourage the audience members to participate with smaller interactions with the performer during virtual performances.

Additional need-finding

Gaining additional insight about the online performing arts space

Additional Interviews



**Uzo:
Singer**



**Seneca: Your
average audience
member**



**Emmanuel:
College DJ +
Musician**



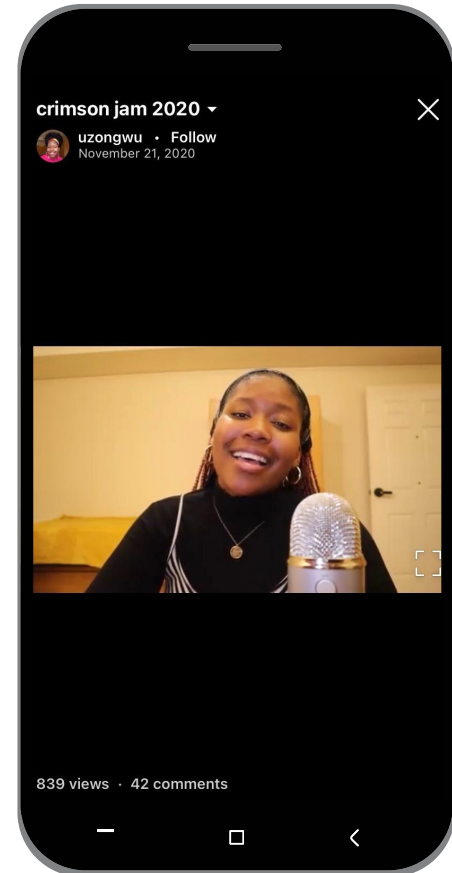
**Chloe: Theater
Star + Producer**

Uzo

- **Singer** and songwriter
- Performed in person, virtually (live), pre-recorded and streamed live

Insights

- Pre-recorded events allow Uzo to **engage with audience** real time and produce high quality videos
- Engaging the audience and **creating a connection** brings energy into the performance



Chloe

- Worked on **Gaeties** production
- Has experience with both in-person virtual productions.

Insights

- Directors want engaging performances and **audience-audience adventure**
- **Communal experiences** within personal circles increases engagement
- In virtual events, the performer is also their own tech crew.



Seneca

- An **average user** who has both live and in-person events.

Insights

- Engages more when they **know the lyrics/artist(s)**.
- Prefers attending events with **friends/loved ones**.
- Having both **audio and video on** - makes the experience more meaningful.



Emmanuel

- **DJ, guitarist, drummer**
- Discovered love for music in Australia

Insights

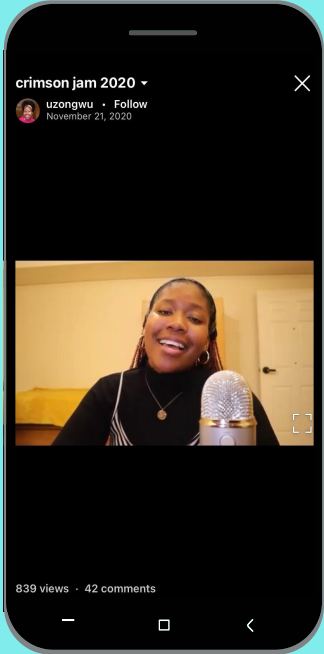
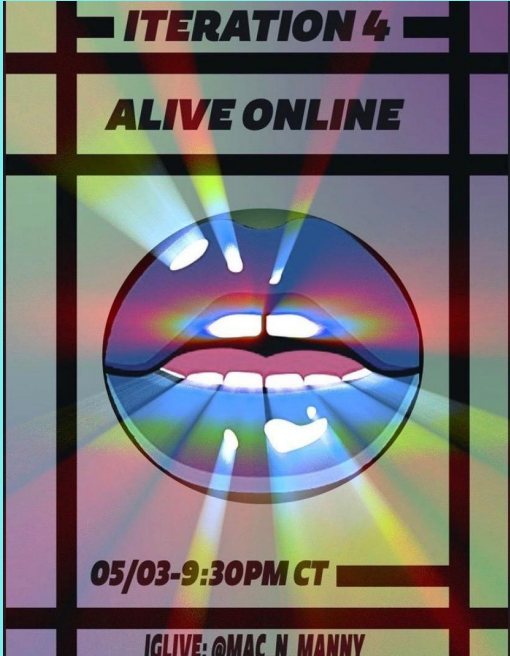
- **Performers want to interact** with audience before and after performing
- Virtual performances **eliminate audience feedback**, both positive and negative.



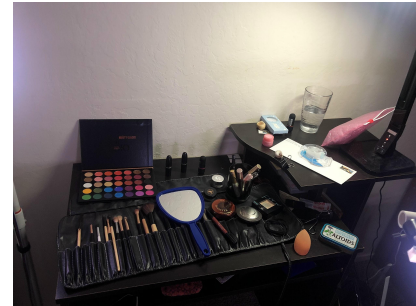
How do we capture this energy...




in these?



“I hope that digital theater continues to live on. ... **I think that virtual theater is just another art form in itself. It's not in person theater. It's not movies, it's virtual performance.**” - Chloe





**Revised
POVs &
HMWs**

Point Of Views

We met a young poet/rapper

We were amazed to realize that they preferred to have audio engagement during a virtual performance even if it was messy and produced a chaotic good engagement.

It would be game changing to Have a way to encourage the audience members to participate with smaller interactions with the performer during virtual performances.

“How might we simulate the energy of a crowd during a performance in a verbal or non-verbal way? ”

Point Of Views

We met a young professional who has attended both virtual and in person concerts.

We were amazed to realize how magical they found the collective experience of thousands of people singing the same song at a live concert

It would be game changing to be able to replicate this collective experience virtually.



“How might we induce the feeling of being part of a collective whole virtually?”

Point Of Views

We met a guitarist/DJ based in Boston that's been growing his musicianship and reach

We were amazed to realize he enjoyed transforming his basement to a club setting for the virtual performance.

It would be game changing to have performers and audience members be able to adapt their physical spaces in ways that promote a realistic and engaging ambiance relating to the performance.

“How might we have artists explore, create and export their physical spaces to audience members and other artists?”

Solutions and Prototypes

Solution #1

Allow audience members to give audio/visual feedback to interact with the performer in a virtual performance to promote engagement.

Experience Prototype: Zoom Jazz Club!

Assumption: Being able to see and hear other people would improve the feeling of engagement for the audience member and the performers.

The performer isn't just playing into a computer, and audience members can see other people watching

Description: Have a **short jazz performance on Zoom** where everyone has their **cameras and microphones on** throughout the performance. **Verbally contribute** as they would in live performances is encouraged.

How: Observation during performance & conducting a post performance **interview**



Pros

Having **cameras and mics on** made the participants **more in the moment**.

They all preferred this **intimate experience** to professional live streams from jazz clubs they've watch in quarantine.

Cons

There were **technical considerations** - mic of audiences etc. are key to maximizing this setup

Learnings

Insight: Initially forcing people to unmute and show their faces may facilitate natural and organic engagement—one isn't thinking to mute or unveil their face

Validity: Our assumption was valid. The audience said they **felt more connected** to the performance, and that it **captured the humanity** that is **absent on Zoom**.

Solution #2

Create “pre-game” activities for smaller friend groups to do together in preparation for a performance to create a more cohesive audience experience.

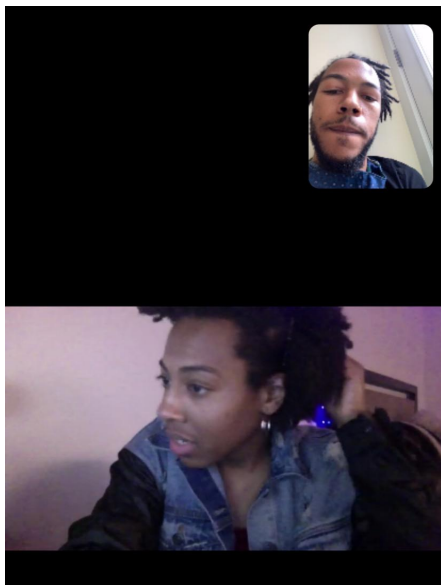
Experience Prototype: The pregame!

Assumption: people enjoy the performance experience more when they get to interact with their friends in smaller settings to get a sense of engagement.

Description: Have the **listening party** for the audience **via screen share** zoom, spotify, and Tiny Desk Concerts on YouTube

How: Tested by observing the audience and conducting interview.

Experience Prototype



The top portion of the image shows a Spotify playlist interface. The playlist is titled "Jazzy Jazz Listening Party" and is created by "kbeache". It contains 4 songs and has a duration of 13 minutes. The playlist cover features a woman with dark hair and a black hood. Below the playlist title is a table of songs:

TITLE	ARTIST	ALBUM		
Need U Bad	Jazmine Sullivan	Fearless	a day ago	4:17
Lions, Tigers & Bears	Jazmine Sullivan	Fearless	a day ago	4:11
Ari's Tale	Jazmine Sullivan, Ari Lennox	Heaux Tales	a day ago	0:50
Girl Like Me (feat. H.E.R.)	Jazmine Sullivan, H.E.R.	Heaux Tales	a day ago	3:45

Below the playlist is a video player showing a live performance. A woman in a long, light-colored coat is singing into a microphone. Behind her, a band is playing, including a bassist and a drummer. To the right, there are two smaller video call windows showing participants. The top window shows a woman with dark hair, and the bottom window shows a man with dreadlocks and a beard. A red "Stop Share" button is visible in the bottom right corner of the video player.

Pros

The audience felt very connected with one another

They appreciated having an **intimate, casual pre-concert setting** where people could talk and move freely

Cons

Forcing audio to be on **all the time** sometimes distracted from the performance

Participants **didn't know how loudly** they needed to speak over the music in order to be heard by others

Learnings

Insight: They enjoyed the idea of being able to watch with friends

Surprise: During the listening party everyone was very chatty and listless, but during the concert everyone was sitting and humming

Validity: Our assumption was validated. All of the participants reported **enjoying the listening party** and **felt connected** to one another and remarked they would attend another similar session.

Solution #3

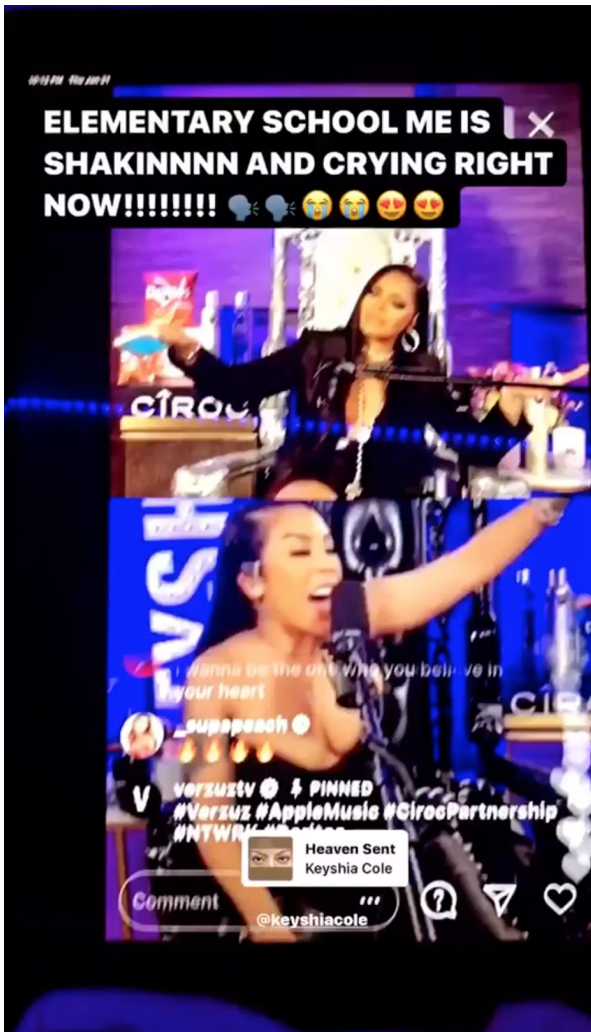
Adapt the audience's physical space to replicate that of the performer's to simulate the experience of one being physically being present at a performance.

Experience Prototype: Lights on vs Lights off!

Assumption: People enjoy the concert experience more when the the ambience surrounding it, including the elements of the physical space, matches the nature of the performance

Description: Individuals compare experience watching performances with mood lighting vs. standard lighting.

How: Tested the experience prototype through **observation and by asking questions** about their experience.



Pros

Mood lighting:

- made individuals **feel more connected** to the space
- **Reduced distractions**
- **Increased engagement** to the performance.

Cons

Natural light from windows **interfered with the ambiance**

Lighting didn't affect engagement to the performer.

Learnings

Insight: The physical space of the audience affects their level of engagement to the performance but not necessarily to performer.

Validity: Our assumption was validated as she felt **more connected to the physical space**

Solution

We see the best solution as a combination between solutions 1 & 2.

We plan to create a **collective listening experience** for the audience, where they can be together before + during performances, interact freely, and watch simultaneously.

Performers can interact with the groups of audience members to their liking.

Summary

Key learnings:

Collective experiences and interaction are key to engagement in performances, both in-person & virtually, for both audience members and performers

Transitions can be used as a tool to **alter levels of engagement** in the performance

Next Steps: Explore the idea of pre-concert and mid-concert activities that promote a collective experience for smaller audiences.

Questions?