

Table 1 'Traditional Theatre' vs. Immersive Theatre

A 'traditional' theatre experience	An immersive theatre experience
<p>You will hear about the performance via the venue's programme or through mainstream adverts and regular marketing strategies. You will buy your ticket from the box office in advance or on the door.</p>	<p>You may hear about the event as part of the venue's programming. The event may be part of a festival of similar events. Or you may <i>only</i> have heard about this via word of mouth and online sources such as Twitter or Facebook. You will be aware that the marketing language used is evocative of the mystery surrounding the event, perhaps similar to that of secret societies. You may buy your ticket via a box office or only through online channels.</p>
<p>You will enter the theatre from the street, usually via the main doors of the theatre building. You will show your tickets and be directed by front of house staff to your seat in the auditorium. You will sit and wait for the event to begin.</p>	<p>You may have an extended or intriguing journey to get to the location. This journey itself makes you aware that you are being taken out of your comfort zone. You may remain outside for most or all of the event. If the piece is housed in a theatre it is likely to be one that supports innovative practice. If this is the case, when you arrive you will be directed to a location that is not in the auditorium. You are unlikely to be seated. If you are seated this act in itself feels unusual.</p>
<p>If you are with friends or family you will be chatting about everyday matters, waiting for the lights to go down. A programme may provide information about the performers, the production, the creative team. You are you. You are here to watch a piece of theatre. You are waiting for it to begin.</p>	<p>You have been placed in a context where the performance has already begun. You don't know what's the performance space and what's the everyday space. You are excited and a bit scared. You have little or no idea what you are about to experience. You may have been separated from your friends as part of the journey within the space, as part of the rules of the experience. You may have been partnered with a stranger who you will rely on to work with you through the experience. You may be on your own.</p>
<p>You are reminded to switch off your mobile. The lights dim, you become quiet. The curtain and/or the lights are raised revealing another world.</p>	<p>You are physically surrounded by another world. You are intensely aware of your habitat and the details of the space. You may be required to use your mobile as part of the performance. You may still be you but you have become a sensitised you. Or you are aware that you have taken on a character, you are playing out a role.</p>
<p>Performers perform on the stage in front of you, technical details add to the impact. You observe, spectate, listen to the unfolding narrative. You may be present in this space through laughter and intellectual attention, other than that the performance is completed with little or no reference to you being there. You may have had an interval at some point between acts. There is a curtain call bow. You applaud. You leave the auditorium.</p>	<p>You are in a different world that has its own rules; that is intimate, epic. You are upright, active, engaged in action with the artist with whom you share the space, or working your way through rooms, corridors, across fields, down narrow streets. You are finding a narrative, following performers. You feel like you are responsible for the secrets you uncover and performances you find. There is no bow. Where the event is a one-on-one you have taken your leave of the artist with whom you have shared the moment. If large-scale you may feel that there is no ending, that a party has begun in the bar. There is a very strong sense of community and shared experience as people chat over drinks, mill around or head to public transport together.</p>
<p>You leave the theatre through the foyer. The performance was good or it was bad. You know you have seen a piece of theatre.</p>	<p>You leave the space and are aware that time has condensed or elongated over the duration of the event. The experience bleeds into the real world, you are aware of attending to detail, sensation being heightened as you wend your way home. You are exhilarated, disturbed, perhaps tired. You are unsure whether that was theatre, art, festival, gig, game, party, therapy. You know you want to do it again. Or you know it demanded too much of you and you will never do it again.</p>