



## Audience directs interactive play

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TORONTO STAR

Name: Rebecca Rouse

Age: 26

Program: Graduate of York University communication and culture master's program

Thesis: *Woyzeck: Augmented Reality Performance Installation and Master's Thesis Project*

The play: *Woyzeck* is based on the life of Johann Christian Woyzeck, a mentally unstable German soldier and drifter who murdered his mistress in a fit of jealousy in 1821. The playwright, Georg Buchner, died before the play could be finished.

The technology: Augmented reality combines the real world with computer-generated effects (as opposed to virtual reality, which is completely digital). It's usually used for military training purposes, but Rouse has used it to enhance the audience members' experience.

How it works: Using a headset and a hand sensor, the viewer walks around to various points on the installation space to view and hear scenes from the play. As the spectator moves, a tracking grid mounted on the ceiling sends out ultrasonic and inertial pulses to the sensors. The filming was done in chroma key on a green screen – the same technology used in weather broadcasts. In this case, it creates ghostly apparitions that appear in front of the viewer's headset.

The viewer's role: "The audience can really act as a film editor," says Rouse. Since the play was unfinished and no one is quite sure how Buchner intended to order the scenes, viewers can choose to start the play from anywhere they wish. The interaction "brings the audience psychologically closer to the material," says Rouse. Approach one area to witness Woyzeck killing his lover, Marie. Touch a Bible hanging from the ceiling and gain some insight through Woyzeck's memories of his mother.

The work involved: Rouse spent two years translating and editing the German play and learned the augmented-reality technology from scratch. She got help from a team that included choreographer Kyle Shepard, music composer Brendan Padgett and technical support from Michelle Moon Lee.

Get in the act: Soon, you'll be able to view the Woyzeck project online at [woyzeck.rebeccarouse.com](http://woyzeck.rebeccarouse.com).

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