"SOMNIUM" VR Demo

Andy Head
*Rochester Institute of Technology*, awhgl@rit.edu

Omen Sade
*Dramatic Space*, omen.sade@gmail.com

Elizabeth Goins
*Rochester Institute of Technology*, eliza.goins@gmail.com

Joe Geigel
*Rochester Institute of Technology*, jmg@cs.rit.edu

Yancarlos Diaz
*Rochester Institute of Technology*, yxd3549@g.rit.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.rit.edu/frameless](https://scholarworks.rit.edu/frameless)

Part of the Other Theatre and Performance Studies Commons

**Recommended Citation**
Head, Andy; Sade, Omen; Goins, Elizabeth; Geigel, Joe; and Diaz, Yancarlos (2020) ""SOMNIUM" VR Demo," *Frameless*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 22.
Available at: [https://scholarworks.rit.edu/frameless/vol3/iss1/22](https://scholarworks.rit.edu/frameless/vol3/iss1/22)

This Demos is brought to you for free and open access by RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Frameless by an authorized editor of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.
“SOMNIUM” VR Demo

Andy Head
Rochester Institute of Technology

Omen Sade
Dramatic Space

Elizabeth Goins
Rochester Institute of Technology

Joe Geigel
Rochester Institute of Technology

Yancarlos Diaz
Rochester Institute of Technology

Abstract—Driven by a desire to overcome challenges from COVID-19 and to explore theatre in a new direction, the fall production of SOMNIUM at the Rochester Institute of Technology took on a completely new concept. Instead of a more traditional, physical theatre piece as it was originally envisioned, the SOMNIUM RIT Team decided to leap into the unknown, and explore a unique blend of devised theatre, film, and 3D game design. This demo allowed audiences to view a short trailer of the production and speak with members of the design team.

Keywords—digital theatre, virtual environments, VR, interactivity, HTC Vive, Oculus

This demo will be paired with the accepted conference talk “Into the Unknown! Digital Theatre and Boldly Going Forward with SOMNIUM” (#9).

Driven by a desire to overcome challenges presented by the rapid onset of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, the fall production of SOMNIUM at RIT took on a completely new concept. Instead of a more traditional, physical theatre piece as it was originally envisioned, the SOMNIUM RIT Team decided to leap into the unknown, and explore a unique blend of devised theatre, film, and 3D game design.

The performance was re-envisioned as an asynchronous experience in which the audience member plays an integral role. Built in Epic’s Unreal 4 engine, SOMNIUM’s new direction turned the stage into a three-dimensional environment for the audience/player to explore.

In this new direction, SOMNIUM was first built-out as a virtual performance for the desktop, meant to be downloaded as a stand-alone “game” for individual players. This allowed the team to focus on the purely logistical questions of student/faculty workflows for such a large team, methods of incorporating videos of actors, and optimization.

This SOMNIUM VR Demo will be a two-pronged experience:

The first prong will be a modification of the original desktop version of the “game”. A new, 5-minute VR “trailer” of SOMNIUM will be distributed via Steam VR and will be playable.
by any audience member with a head-mounted display such as an HTC Vive or Oculus. Players will also be provided a link to play through the full SOMNIUM VR experience. The team hopes that this experience will be made more accessible to audiences and that there can be several headsets made available in a VR lab at RIT’s MAGIC Spell Studios.

The second prong will be a live-streamed director’s cut of SOMNIUM, in which the director and a panel of several key members of the VR production team will walk audiences through the experience and discuss in detail how and why specific choices were made for designing and developing the virtual world of the story. The live-stream will be made available via Twitch.

Overall, this project incorporates various educational stakeholders and students: classes in computing, liberal arts, and theatre arts all joined together to create the new, digital SOMNIUM production, while also incorporating new approaches in pedagogy and re-thinking what theatre is in the digital age, particularly with regards to theatre and the virtual experience.