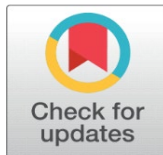


MEDIA-BASED THEATRE DOCUMENTATION: A PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS OF “ERENDIRA’S METAMORPHOSIS” AS A RECORDED THEATRICAL EXPERIENCE

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Received 10 February 2026
Accepted 03 April 2026
Published 14 May 2026

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DOI
[10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i8s.2026.8069](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i8s.2026.8069)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

This article studies “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” as a recorded theatrical experience. The production was conceptualised, designed and directed by Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami and presented by AANK_A Creative Line. It is based on Gabriel García Márquez’s novella *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother*. Using qualitative performance analysis, the study examines how the recorded video preserves, changes and re-presents the stage event. The discussion focuses on the performer’s body, the meta-narrator, the white net-like tent, masks, props, lighting, sound, camera framing and the visual rhythm of the performance. The paper argues that the video is not merely a record of a past theatre event. It creates a new viewing condition in which theatre reaches the spectator through screen, frame and recorded sound. The live audience experienced space, presence and shared atmosphere directly; the online viewer receives these elements through camera distance, visual selection and repeatable access. The article also reads the work through postdramatic theatre, intertextual dramaturgy and documentation studies. It shows that media-based documentation keeps the memory of the performance active while producing a different form of spectatorship. The study concludes that recorded theatre can become significant research material for contemporary Assamese theatre, performance pedagogy and digital archiving.

Keywords: Media-Based Theatre, Theatre Documentation, Recorded Performance, “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis”, Postdramatic Theatre, Digital Spectatorship, Performance Analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

Theatre is normally experienced as a live event. A performer and a spectator share the same time, space and atmosphere. The actor’s body, the audience’s attention and the visible stage environment meet only for a short duration. For this reason, theatre has often been understood as an art of presence and disappearance. Peggy Phelan’s statement, “Performance’s only life is in the present” (Phelan, 1993, p. 146), remains a useful starting point for this debate. It reminds us that the live event cannot be repeated in exactly the same way.

At the same time, contemporary theatre no longer remains only inside the auditorium. Performances are photographed, recorded, uploaded, archived and watched later on digital platforms. A video does not reproduce the complete live event. Yet it gives another kind of access. It allows the viewer to return to the performance, pause a

moment, watch a gesture again and study the stage image as a document. This makes recorded theatre an important object for research.

The present paper studies “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” as such a recorded theatrical experience. The production was presented by AANK_A Creative Line and conceptualised, designed and directed by Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami. The AANK website records that the play was first performed on 26 and 27 June 2022 at Udara, H. No. 52, Naojan Path, Uzan Bazar, Guwahati, Assam. It also states that the language of the performance is English and gibberish, and that the play is based on García Márquez’s *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother* (AANK_A Creative Line, n.d.-a; García Márquez, 1978).

The production brochure gives the thematic markers “Power Game” and “Abuse of Power” (AANK_A Creative Line, 2022). These words are not decorative. They identify the central concern of the performance. The production does not present Eréndira only as a literary figure from a Latin American novella. It uses her story to ask larger questions about power, labour, sexuality, obedience, fantasy, memory and social control.

The full script shows that the performance is arranged in six sequences. These sequences include the arrival of a meta-narrator, the tent as a space of exploitation, references to Salvador Dali, Paulo Coelho, Michel Foucault, fairy tales, Assamese song and Assamese poetry, and a changed climax where Eréndira’s agency becomes central (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). An Assamese article in Prakash also reads the production as a work of new concept and new style in contemporary theatre (Bora, 2023). The performance therefore works through fragments, bodily images and intertextual references rather than through a simple linear plot.

This paper does not attempt to reconstruct the original live performance fully. Such a reconstruction is not possible from video alone. Instead, it studies the recording as a performance document and as a screen-based theatrical experience. The main question is: how does “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” produce meaning when it is viewed as recorded theatre?

The study is useful for three reasons. First, it helps locate Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami’s work within contemporary Assamese experimental and postdramatic theatre. Second, it examines how a theatre performance changes when it is experienced through video. Third, it shows how a video, script, brochure, photographs and website materials can together form a research archive for performance studies.

Production Details

Table 1

Table 1 Production information compiled from the production brochure, AANK website, script and video details.	
Item	Details
Title	“Eréndira’s Metamorphosis”
Tagline	Power Game; Abuse of Power
Presented by	AANK_A Creative Line
Basis	“The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother” by Gabriel García Márquez
Concept, design and direction	Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami
On stage	Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami and Namrata Sarma
Dialogue	Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami and Namrata Sarma
Music design	Tarali Sarma
Music arrangement	Monjit Nath
Voice-over	Indrajit Das
Photography and videography	Arup Jyoti Kalita
Light, stage design and scenography	Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami
Language	English and gibberish
Venue of first performance	Udara, H. No. 52, Naojan Path, Uzan Bazar, Guwahati, Assam
Performance dates	26 June 2022 and 27 June 2022
Duration	1 hour 15 minutes
Video source	YouTube video uploaded by Mrinal Jyoti Goswami on 16 April 2023

1.1. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

This study uses four connected ideas: liveness, documentation, postdramatic theatre and recorded spectatorship.

The first idea is liveness. In live theatre, the spectator and performer share a physical situation. The viewer can choose where to look, and the body of the actor is received in actual scale and space. Erika Fischer-Lichte (2008) explains performance as an event shaped through the bodily co-presence of performers and spectators. This idea helps us understand what is altered when theatre becomes video. The recording removes bodily co-presence, but it keeps visual and aural traces of the event.

The second idea is documentation. Documentation never copies a performance in a neutral way. It selects, frames and stores. Roland Barthes writes, “a photograph is always invisible” because attention moves toward the thing photographed rather than toward the photograph as an object (Barthes, 1981, p. 6). This idea can be extended to theatre video. The viewer may feel that the video directly shows the performance, but the recording is also shaped by camera position, distance, light, sound quality, editing and platform.

The third idea is postdramatic theatre. Hans-Thies Lehmann’s work is relevant because “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” does not depend on plot alone. It uses fragments, repeated words, images, bodily movement, quotation, music, props and direct address. Lehmann observes that performance art may be designed “not so much to transform a reality external to them” but “to strive for a self-transformation” (Lehmann, 2006, p. 137). The production brochure also uses this line to frame the performance. In this production, the performer does not merely narrate Eréndira’s story. She passes through changing states of narrator, character, witness, victim, manipulator and commentator.

The fourth idea is recorded spectatorship. Philip Auslander (2008) shows that the relation between live performance and mediatized performance is complex. In contemporary culture, performance is often produced, remembered and circulated through media. Dixon’s history of digital performance also shows how theatre has increasingly met screens, recording, installation and new media forms (Dixon, 2007). Therefore, the recorded version of “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” should not be treated as a weak substitute for the live event. It should be studied as another site where the performance continues to act.

The paper also uses Patrice Pavis’s approach to performance analysis. Pavis (2003) suggests that performance can be studied through visible and audible signs such as gesture, body, costume, object, sound, space, rhythm and audience relation. This approach is suitable because “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” is not only a text-based drama. It is a physical, visual and sonic performance.

2. METHOD

This study follows a qualitative performance analysis method. The primary source is the recorded video of “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis”, uploaded on YouTube by Mrinal Jyoti Goswami on 16 April 2023 (Goswami, 2023). The video is read together with the full script, the production brochure, the AANK website details and selected production photographs credited to AANK_A Creative Line.

The study uses close viewing and close reading. The video and script are observed together to identify the main performance signs: the performer’s body, the narrator’s speech, the white net-like tent, masks, props, light, costume, music, sound, movement and camera framing. The purpose is not to measure the performance through numbers. The purpose is to understand how meaning is produced through recorded theatrical form.

The analysis is divided into five main areas. First, the paper studies the recording as a theatre archive. Second, it analyses the meta-narrator and fragmented dramaturgy. Third, it examines the body, labour and abuse of power. Fourth, it studies the net, masks and objects as performance signs. Fifth, it discusses recorded viewing, sound, language, visual composition and Eréndira’s agency.

The study has one limitation. Since the main source is a video record, it cannot fully recover the live atmosphere of the original performance. The audience response, actual distance, scale of the body and acoustic presence of the performer are not available in the same way. However, this limitation is also part of the argument. It shows why recorded theatre should be analysed as a different experience, not as a perfect copy of live theatre.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. THE RECORDED PERFORMANCE AS THEATRE ARCHIVE

The recorded version of “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” works first as an archive. Without recording, many details of the performance would remain available only through memory, short reviews, photographs, script notes and production records. The video keeps the performance available for viewers who were not present at the first staging. It also allows researchers to return to the acting, movement, stage design and sound more than once.

This archival value is important for contemporary Assamese theatre. Experimental performances often have limited live runs and are performed in intimate spaces. A video record gives such performances a second life. It does not replace the live event, but it keeps a trace through which the event can be studied and discussed.

The archive of this performance is not only the YouTube video. It is a cluster of materials: the video, the full script, the brochure, the AANK web page, the production photographs and related writings on Goswami’s theatre. The script gives the sequence structure and dialogue. The brochure gives production credits and conceptual framing. The photographs show selected visual moments. The website confirms public production information. The video makes movement, rhythm and voice available for repeated study.

Diana Taylor’s distinction between archive and repertoire is useful here. The archive stores documents, texts and recordings, while the repertoire carries embodied practice, gesture and performance memory (Taylor, 2003). “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” stands between these two ideas. The video is an archival document, but it also preserves traces of repertoire: bodily movement, rhythm, voice, breath, gesture and stage action.

3.2. META-NARRATION AND FRAGMENTED DRAMATURGY

The full script begins with an empty stage and a silver spherical object. The narrator enters with a cart, searches for the object and repeatedly says “Text” (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). This repetition is not ordinary dialogue. It introduces a performer who is struggling with texts, stories and the burden of narration. The narrator later claims that she is not one narrator but “many narrators” and a “meta narrator” (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). This becomes a major key to the performance.

The meta-narrator does not simply tell Eréndira’s story. She questions the story, enters it, interrupts it and connects it with other texts. The script refers to Homer, Shakespeare, Veda Vyasa, Shankardeva, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Bakhtin, Salvador Dali, Paulo Coelho, Kathleen Barry, Foucault, fairy tales and Assamese cultural materials. The performance becomes less a direct retelling of García Márquez and more a dialogue with many literary and cultural memories.

Kishore Bharadwaj Boruah’s article on Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami’s plays is helpful for understanding this method. Boruah observes that Goswami prefers “a collage of fragments” that brings together references from classical literature, folk literature, contemporary life and politics (Boruah, 2023., p. 59). This observation fits “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis”. The play does not move in a straight line. It moves through images, voices, jokes, anger, quotations, bodily actions and sudden tonal changes.

This fragmented structure is not a weakness. It is part of the performance logic. The spectator has to connect the pieces. A live spectator does this inside the theatre space. A recorded spectator does it through the screen. In both cases, meaning is not given as a finished message. It is produced through attention and association.

The repeated word “Text” is especially significant. It suggests that the narrator is surrounded by inherited stories. She carries them almost like pain in the body. The script states that she tries to keep the texts locked inside her, but they “churn and churn” (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). This turns intertextuality into physical experience. Text is not only read. It is swallowed, carried, vomited and performed.

3.3. BODY, LABOUR AND ABUSE OF POWER

The production’s thematic line is clear: “Power Game” and “Abuse of Power” (AANK_A Creative Line, 2022). The source story already contains exploitation. In García Márquez’s novella, the grandmother uses Eréndira’s body to repay a debt. Goswami’s performance does not present this as a private family problem only. It opens the issue into a larger question of power, labour, sexuality and social control.

Sequence 2 is central to this argument. The script states that Eréndira remains inside the tent while the grandmother keeps sending more customers. She becomes so busy that she cannot get up from the bed. At the end of the sequence, exhausted, she asks “how many more?” in gibberish (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). Here language begins to fail, and the body carries the meaning that speech cannot fully express.

The tent is not merely a scenic object. It is a space of control. It hides and displays the body at the same time. The production photographs show a white net-like structure over the performer. Because the net is transparent, the body remains visible. Because the net surrounds the performer, it also becomes an image of enclosure. This makes the stage image powerful for a recorded viewer because the camera can frame body and structure together.

Figure 1



Figure 1 Performer Framed within the White Net-Like Scenic Structure. Photo Credit: AANK_A Creative Line

Sequence 3 widens the question of labour. The narrator recalls that Eréndira was washer woman, cleaning woman, cook, gardener, bath giver, hairstylist and pet caretaker (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). This list is important because it shows that exploitation is not only sexual. It is also domestic, emotional and economic. The performance connects the female body with unpaid work, debt and obedience.

The performance also moves from fiction to social reality by referring to Kathleen Barry’s work on sexual slavery. This is a difficult section, but it is central to the ethical pressure of the performance. The narrator asks the spectator not to remain protected by the idea that “this is fiction”. The play uses García Márquez’s story as an entry point for thinking about real structures of exploitation.

The body becomes the main site of this argument. The performer bends, crawls, sits, stretches, hides, rises and returns. These actions are not decorative. They show pressure on the body. In the photographs, the performer is often surrounded by darkness, with a strong light on the body or face. This contrast makes the body appear exposed, fragile and resistant at the same time.

3.4. THE NET, MASKS AND OBJECTS AS PERFORMANCE SIGNS

The visual design of “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” depends on selected objects. The cart, silver sphere, eye, masks, red cloth and white net-like tent all become theatrical signs. They are not used only for realistic description. They help the performance think through images.

The white net-like tent is the strongest object-sign. In one sequence, it is the place of captivity. In another, it becomes connected with adolescent desire and the first experience of love and sexual arousal. Later, in Sequence 5, the script states that Eréndira plays with the net as a symbol of Ulysses, ties it into a ball and continues playing with it (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). The same material changes meaning. It can become prison, veil, skin, desire, lover, trap and play-object.

This changing use of one object is a major feature of theatre. A stage object does not have one fixed meaning. Its meaning changes with the performer’s action. Pavis’s approach is useful because it allows object, body, movement and

space to be read together (Pavis, 2003). The net cannot be understood separately from the body. It becomes meaningful because the performer touches it, enters it, hides inside it, fights with it and transforms it.

Masks also play an important role. The script refers to a queue of masks and to the grandmother’s carnival. The masks suggest role-playing, anonymity and social performance. In the recorded images, masks appear in the dark background while the performer remains in the lit centre. This arrangement suggests that Eréndira is watched by a world of silent faces. The masks create a carnival world, but the carnival is not innocent. It is linked with money, customers, performance and power.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Circular Illuminated Stage with Masks, Props and Performer-Object Relation. Photo Credit: AANK_A Creative Line

The silver sphere that becomes an eye is another significant sign. At first it appears as a playful object. Later, when the silver foil is removed, it becomes an eye. This transformation matters for a paper on documentation. The eye suggests seeing, watching and being watched. In recorded theatre, there is also another eye: the camera. The play therefore moves between the stage-eye and the camera-eye.

3.5. RECORDED VIEWING AND THE CAMERA’S ROLE

When “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” is viewed as video, the camera becomes part of the experience. In the live performance, a spectator could choose where to look. In the video, the camera decides the frame. It selects distance, angle and focus. This changes theatre into a mediated event.

The camera can make some details stronger. A close frame can show facial expression, eye movement and small gestures. A wide frame can show the circular stage, ring of light, net and spatial relation between objects. The production photographs show how powerful this visual field is. A dark background, a circular lighted area and a white net create clear visual contrast. These elements work strongly in recorded viewing because the screen can hold them as composed images.

At the same time, the camera reduces some elements. The viewer cannot feel the full size of the space. The sound is received through recording. The audience’s live presence is mostly absent. The heat, silence, discomfort or collective response of the room cannot be fully captured. This is why the recording should not be treated as identical with the live event.

However, the recording gives another kind of value. It gives repeatability. A researcher can watch the same section again. A viewer can study a gesture, pause or visual composition carefully. In this sense, recorded theatre becomes useful for pedagogy. Students can learn how a performance uses space, body, object and voice.

Matthew Reason (2006) explains that performance documentation has a difficult relation with disappearance. Documentation cannot bring back the live event fully, but it creates traces through which the event can be discussed. “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” shows this clearly. The video does not replace the performance, but it allows the performance to remain active as research material.

Figure 3



Figure 3 Close Visual Frame of the Performer in Dark Theatrical Lighting. Photo Credit: AANK_A Creative Line

3.6. SOUND, LANGUAGE AND GIBBERISH

The play's language is officially described as English and gibberish (AANK_A Creative Line, n.d.). This is important. Gibberish is not meaningless here. It is a performance language. It appears when ordinary language is not enough, or when speech must become sound, rhythm and bodily energy. Mahajan and Mallik (2026)

In Sequence 2, Eréndira's exhausted question "how many more?" comes in gibberish (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). This makes the moment more physical. The spectator may not understand exact words, but the body and sound communicate distress. In this way, gibberish allows the performance to move beyond literary language.

Music and song also shape the performance. Sequence 3 includes a Goalporiya Lokageet associated with Protima Pandey Baruah. Sequence 5 uses a poem by Nilomoni Phukan with floor movement and music (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). These choices connect the performance to Assamese cultural sound while the source story remains Latin American. The result is not a simple adaptation. It is cultural re-composition.

Boruah notes that in Goswami's theatre, speech and music shift, and spectators respond not only to meaning but also to sounds and images (Boruah, n.d., p. 61). This observation is relevant here. Dialogue in "Eréndira's Metamorphosis" is not only information. It is rhythm, texture and performance action.

For the recorded viewer, sound becomes especially important. The microphone and recording quality shape listening. The viewer hears voice, song and silence through speakers or headphones. This can create intimacy, but it can also reduce the natural acoustic force of the live performance. Thus, sound in recorded theatre is both preserved and transformed.

3.7. VISUAL COMPOSITION, LIGHT AND PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

The photographs supplied for the study are not only illustrations. They are part of the documentation archive. They show how the performance creates a strong visual identity. A recurring image is the performer in a white top with colour marks, a red cloth tied around the waist and a dark stage around her. The circular lighted stage creates a clear boundary. The white net or fabric creates movement and symbolic pressure.

One photograph shows the performer inside the net, with masks around the space. This image can be read as a visual summary of the play: body inside structure, face behind fabric, social masks around and light marking the performance zone. Another image shows the performer with flowing white material. The body appears partly hidden and partly extended. This supports the theme of metamorphosis.

Lighting is central here. The dark background isolates the body. The blue and green ring lights create a controlled performance circle. This circle may be read as stage, cage, carnival ring, marketplace or ritual zone. The meaning changes with context. In recorded form, the strong contrast between darkness and light helps the viewer identify the main visual field.

The visual design also supports the postdramatic quality of the work. There is no realistic house, desert or market. Instead, the stage gives signs: net, masks, cart, light, fabric and body. The viewer must connect these signs. This makes the performance open and interpretive.

Figure 4



Figure 4 Movement with White Fabric/Net Suggesting Struggle and Transformation. Photo Credit: AANK_A Creative Line

3.8. REWRITING ERÉNDIRA’S AGENCY

One of the most important parts of the performance is the changed ending. In García Márquez’s story, Ulises kills the grandmother and Eréndira runs away. In Goswami’s script, the narrator says that García Márquez killed the grandmother through Ullyses, but the performance would like to change the climax. The narrator then suggests “self-help is the best help” (Goswami & Sarma, n.d.). This changes the direction of agency.

This is a significant intervention. The performance does not simply adapt the novella. It argues with it. It asks what happens when Eréndira acts for herself. This change is important in a paper on metamorphosis. The metamorphosis is not only visual or theatrical. It is also ethical and political. Eréndira changes from exploited body to deciding body.

The changed ending also connects with the subject of media-based documentation. In recorded theatre, this moment becomes available for repeated viewing and discussion. A viewer can return to it and compare it with García Márquez’s source. This makes the video useful for adaptation studies as well as performance studies.

The final disappearance of Eréndira in shadow and light also suits the recorded medium. The body vanishes into the visual field. The camera records disappearance. This is one of the paradoxes of theatre documentation: it preserves a moment of vanishing. The viewer sees the body disappear, and because it is recorded, the disappearance can be watched again.

4. CONCLUSION

This article has studied “Eréndira’s Metamorphosis” as a recorded theatrical experience. The analysis shows that the performance video is not only a memory of a live event. It is also a medium through which the performance can be studied, circulated and re-viewed.

The production uses a postdramatic structure. It does not follow a simple linear plot. It uses meta-narration, repeated words, intertextual references, songs, movement, masks, objects and changing performance identities. The narrator moves between storyteller, critic, performer and Eréndira. This makes the performance open, layered and self-aware.

The body is central to the work. Through movement, exhaustion, play, enclosure and resistance, the performer’s body carries the meanings of power and exploitation. The white net-like tent becomes one of the strongest visual signs. It becomes a space of captivity, desire, memory and transformation. Masks, fabric, cart, eye and circular light help create a symbolic performance world.

The recorded form changes the spectator's experience. It removes physical co-presence, but it gives repeatability, visual access and archival value. The camera selects what the viewer sees. The screen changes scale and distance. Yet the recording helps the performance reach later viewers and researchers.

The paper concludes that media-based theatre documentation should not be treated as a secondary or weak copy of live theatre. It is a different mode of theatrical life. In the case of "Eréndira's Metamorphosis", the video, script, photographs, brochure and website together form a valuable archive of contemporary Assamese experimental theatre. The recorded performance keeps the stage event available for analysis while also producing a screen-based theatre experience.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The primary video material analysed in this study is publicly available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3qS6z2LNds8>. Production details are available on the AANK_A Creative Line website: <https://aank.org/erendiras-metamorphosis/>. Related reports and brochures are listed on the AANK reports and brochures page (AANK_A Creative Line, n.d.-b). Additional research materials include the production brochure, full script, selected article material and photographs supplied for academic use

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author acknowledges AANK_A Creative Line for the production materials and photographs of "Eréndira's Metamorphosis". Photo credit for all performance photographs: AANK_A Creative Line. The author also acknowledges the publicly available video uploaded by Mrinal Jyoti Goswami and the production details available on the AANK website.

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