

PREPARE  
YOURSELF

CONGRATULATIONS  
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

*You* ARE ABOUT TO READ A  
**CLASSIC**

Not a  
**DEAD**  
classic, but a  
LIVING,  
VIVID,  
EVOLVING,  
one.

**NOW**

UPDATED from the 1991  
original, written when the  
PERSONAL COMPUTER & the  
INTERNET were but

**LITTLE  
PUPS**

WRITTEN, RESEARCHED AND PREPARED by the talented

**BRENDA LAUREL**

“ENTREPRENEUR” “RESEARCHER” “PROFESSOR” “TECH DIVA” “ACTOR”  
“MIXED VETERAN” “GAME DESIGNER” AND “VERY CURIOUS PERSON”

**NOW**

REVISED, REIMAGINED,  
and REINVIGORATED for  
today's impressionable

**YOUTH**

# COMPUTERS AS THEATRE

**SECOND EDITION**

**PERFORM**

WONDERS IN SOFTWARE DESIGN

**APPLAUD**

DISRESPECT for the COMMONPLACE

**TRIUMPH**

AS OUR TOOLS AND KNOWLEDGE  
AMPLIFY US

**JUST THINK...**

ALL THIS BRILLIANCE IS  
RESTING IN YOUR OWN

**TWO  
TREMBLING  
HANDS**

**MARVEL**

AT ANCIENT GREEK WISDOM

**ENGAGE**

the WORLD, SAID, & EVERYTHING

**DREAM**

of the STRANGE NEW WORLDS  
YOU CAN ENTER

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

LET'S BEGIN

# *Computers as Theatre*

*Second Edition*

# Computers as Theatre

## Table of Contents

Contents

Foreword

Preface

Acknowledgments

About the Author

Chapter 1 The Nature of the Beast

    The Interface

        Provenance of the Interface

        Interface Metaphors

        Interface Interdisciplines

    Throw the Baggage Out

        A Definitional Digression

        Models of the Interface

        The Worlds a Stage

    Theatre: More than an Interface Metaphor

        Is Drama Serious Enough?

        An Artistic Perspective

Chapter 2 Dramatic Foundations: Part 1: Elements of  
    Qualitative Structure

    Hoary Poetics

        The Cultural Backdrop

        Drama: Tragedy, Comedy, and Melodrama

# **Table of Contents**

## **The Four Causes, or Why Things Are the Way They Are**

The Four Causes in Drama

The Four Causes in Human-Computer Interaction

## **The Six Elements and Causal Relations among Them**

Enactment

Pattern

Language

Thought

Character and Agency

Plot: The Whole Action

## **Chapter 3 Dramatic Foundations: Part II: Orchestrating Action**

### **Whole Actions**

### **Dramatic Potential: The Flying Wedge**

Probability and Causality

Dramatic Unfolding: The Importance of Time

### **Dramatic Anatomy**

Complication and Resolution

Conventional Kinds of Action

Fractal Qualities of Action

Discovery, Surprise, and Reversal

## **Chapter 4 Dramatic Interactors: Collaboration, Constraints, and Engagement**

### **Human-Computer Interaction as Mediated Collaboration**

Interaction among Interactors

Interactions among Players

### **Constraints**

# **Table of Contents**

Why Constraints Matter

Constraints and Creativity

Characteristics of Good Constraints

Character as a Constraint System

Persona and Character

Engagement: The First-Person Imperative

Characteristics of First-Person Experience

Empathy and Catharsis

## **Chapter 5 Design Heuristics**

Computer as Medium

Interface Metaphors: Powers and Limitations

Alternatives to Metaphor in Design

The Primacy of Action

Strategy and Tactics

Action with a Dramatic Shape

Designing Character and Thought

Free-Floating Agency

Collective Characters

Affordances for Emotional Interaction

Thinking about Thought

Understanding Audiences

## **Chapter 6 New Terrain in Interaction Design**

Methods and Media

A Note on Advertising

Transmedia Design

Virtual Reality

Mobile Devices

Augmented Reality

# **Table of Contents**

Distributed and Participatory Sensing

How Do These Media and Methods Help Designers?

Extending the Geometry of Dramatic Interaction

From Lines to Fields: Clues from the Medieval Theatre

From Fields to Environments: The Renaissance Faire

Blossoming Geometries of Plot

Design for Emergence

Lessons from Biology

Design for the Good

References

Index