

## UpStage receives Digital Strategy funding boost



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*for immediate release*

UpStage, a web-based venue for live interactive performance, has received funding through the Government's Digital Strategy's Community Partnership Fund.

The grant will subsidise "phase 2" development of the software and community workshops, enabling communities to create their own content for the online medium.

"We are delighted to receive this funding. The grant will enable us to introduce UpStage to many communities," said UpStage project manager Helen Varley Jamieson. "The release of the UpStage 2 is planned for mid-2007."

Project partners are Auckland University of Technology, CityLink and MediaLab Ltd. AUT software development students have been working on the software during 2006 as part of their final year coursework, and their programming will be incorporated into the second release of UpStage.

Jamieson and UpStage team member Vicki Smith will facilitate workshops with community groups, schools and artists around the country, assisting them in developing their own projects in UpStage.

"UpStage is an online environment that communities can use to explore and exchange stories," says Smith. "It differs from other vehicles in its immediacy (the action happens in real time), its egalitarian nature (users need only a browser and internet connection to access it) and importantly it may be used on either dial-up or broadband. This is of particular appeal as it allows remote rural users similar access to their urban counterparts."

The idea for UpStage originally came from the globally dispersed cyberperformance troupe *Avatar Body Collision*, of which Jamieson and Smith are members. They were using free chat applications to create live online performances with colleagues in London and Helsinki, and dreamed of having customisable software that was specifically designed for creative performance, rather than social chat. The first version of UpStage was launched in 2004 with the assistance of a grant from the Smash Palace Collaboration Fund, and it has been used in live performances, school projects, artists' workshops and presentations around the world.

UpStage is an open source development and is designed to work across different browsers and operating systems. Players and audience need only a standard browser with the Flash Player plug-in and standard internet connection to participate.

For further information, visit [www.upstage.org.nz](http://www.upstage.org.nz) or contact Helen Varley Jamieson, [helen@upstage.org.nz](mailto:helen@upstage.org.nz), phone (04) 934 9605 or 021 023 92928.

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