

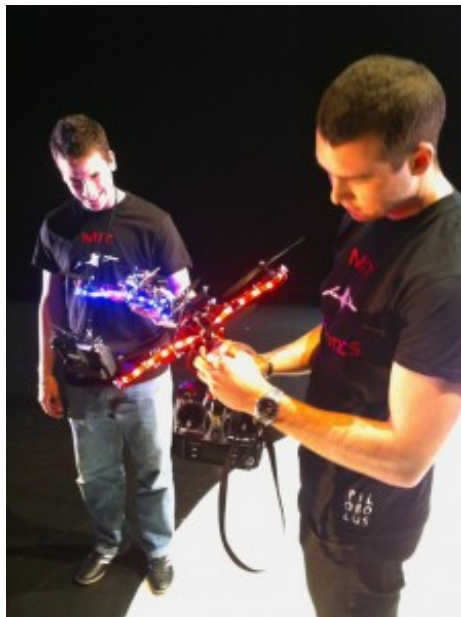
Dances with robots, part 2

<http://blog.pilobolus.org/2010/12/dances-with-robots-part-2/>

December 20, 2010

This blog post is part two of an [earlier post](#).

At the beginning of December, we previewed a piece entitled “Seraph” – a collaboration with MIT’s Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory ([CSAIL](#)) and its Distributed Robotics Lab ([DRL](#)). A blend of technology and dance, the Boston Globe commented on the piece, saying “it explores how machines are us — in their relationships to one another and the people who make them.”



DRL's Wil Selby and Daniel Soltero, pilots of the two robots in "Seraph," sporting Pilobolus/MIT Robotics t-shirts before the show

Pilobolus and the Distributed Robotics Lab, led by Daniela Rus and including current and former MIT PhD students William Selby, Brian Julian, Daniel Soltero, Andrew Marchese, and Carrick Detweiler, collaborated on the piece from the beginning. In “Seraph,” Pilobolus’ [Molly Gawler](#) explores and dances with two dinner plate-sized robots, which were designed and built by former students and collaborators in the DRL. To increase the visibility of the robots on stage and to give the robots personality, the robots were “dressed” with programmable LED lights, the design and implementation of which were accomplished by Carrick Detweiler, now an assistant professor at University of Nebraska, Lincoln, in conjunction with a Ph.D. student from the DRL, Brian John Julian.

In the creation and rehearsal process, Rus noticed Molly’s changing relationship with the robots. “From interest to interaction to affection,” Rus said. “At some point Molly started calling the robots ‘Wil’ and ‘Danny’ and used expressions such as ‘Come here Wil,’ and ‘Go there Danny,’ so the robots effectively became avatars.”

During the Boston performance, DRL students Wil Selby and Daniel Soltero piloted the robots from the stage via remote control. “Performing onstage with Pilobolus was an unforgettable experience,” Soltero said. “It was really incredible for me to be part of such a performance, where I learned so much and had so much fun.”

Selby added, “We got to teach them about the robots (and will teach [Jun](#) how to fly in the future) and they taught us some handstands and other things as well before the shows. It was awesome being able to watch the show from backstage. It definitely gave us a new appreciation for their skill and athleticism.”

“Seraph” will premiere at the Joyce Theater in NYC as a part of our summer season in 2011.

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1. [Dances with robots](#)

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