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## Movie-like effects change shape of New York stage

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By Dena Aubin

NEW YORK (Reuters) - An innovative 3-D video projection setup that gives the illusion of actors suspended in midair appears on the U.S. theatrical stage for the first time this week.

The gravity-defying images appear in "Losing Something," an experimental New York play opening on Friday that brings film technology to the stage, where video pixels replace older techniques of suspending an actor using harnesses and ropes.

The video production technique, called the Eyeliner system and developed by Dubai-based company Event Works, was previously used for Madonna's performance at the 2006 Grammy Awards.

"It makes sense for many of the things that people traditionally would like to stage but really haven't been able to," said Kevin Cunningham, the play's writer and director.

During the play, actors hidden from the audience in a pit in front of the stage are recorded and projected so they appear suspended mid-air.

In other scenes, by prerecording the main actor and projecting his image, the Eyeliner morphs the actor on stage into an older version of himself, letting the two talk with each other.

Cunningham said video had been previously used on stage mostly as a flat backdrop.

The new technology harks back to an old stage trick called Pepper's Ghost, which used glass and lighting to create ghost-like images.

Instead of glass and lights, Eyeliner uses high-definition television to project images on a thin, invisible foil stretched across the stage. Computer software is used to manipulate the images in real time.

"Losing Something" is based in part on Cunningham's memories of the 2001 World Trade Center attacks. It traces the experiences of a man drifting into middle age and confronting memories of people he has lost.

The projected images command attention because they are so unusual, Cunningham said.

But the technology is not going to change the basic experience of the theater, said lead actor Aldo Perez.

"I don't think this technology is going to change theater as much as give people more options for what they can do," he said.

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