Birth of Agamon, the World's First remote operated Yosakoi Robot!
@2023 Kochi Yosakoi Festival

31st August, 2023, Tokyo

We have long wanted to have robots to dance in Yosakoi! This year, we were finally able to realize our long-held dream! The most important feature of these Agamon robot avatars is that they can be operated remotely, and that they can be a media to experience live festivals in faraway countries!
While most robots are mechanisms to automatically perform certain movements or tasks, the Agamons are robot avatars that can channel the desired movements of the remote operator by moving it's body and limbs while streaming the scenery and information around the festival site. Our mission is to popularize these new uses and roles of robots to many people around the world.

There are many wonderful places, fun events, and beautiful people who are looking for new friendships around the world.

On the other hand, there are many people who cannot leave their limited space due to physical disabilities, age restrictions, time, distance, and other factors. The purpose of the Agamon Project is to provide a way to overcome these hurdles by having a robot act as a remote avatar and connect people from remote lands!

The Yosakoi Festival, born in Kochi City, Japan, celebrated its 70th anniversary in the summer of 2023. We were welcomed by the "CANAVALAVA" (formerly CANAVAL) dance group, which has been promoting Yosakoi dance around the world for many years, to participate in the parade with them.

To put this project together, many people with experiences in various fields brought their wisdom and formed this "Yosakoi Robot Executive Committee. It was decided to debut three Agamons in this year, and preparations for making them began around mid-May.

“Agamon” is the name of a genre of these remote operated soft toy looking robots, and we planned to introduce a variety of shapes, functionalities and designs in a series of Agamons. It was decided that the Aamons this time would be about 1 meter tall and dance mainly with their upper bodies. The design of the robot's internal mechanisms, electronic circuits, communication functions as well as the development of the remote operation application were started by designers and developers in three countries, namely Japan, India, and the UK.

The three options for the method of locomotion for the Agamons were evaluated, to put them on a radio-controlled car and move it freely by the remote operator, to give it the ability to follow a pre-decided logo, or to put it on a wagon cart and push them around by humans. After considering the conditions of the street, the lighting situation, the crowds, and the legal restrictions, it was decided to follow the logo during the day and move it by human power on a wagon at night.

In June, we began inviting designs for the exterior image of the Agamons from around the world.

In July, as we narrowed down the exterior designs, we continued to work sleeplessly, learning and optimizing the process to realize these designs, within the available time and resources. With the help of ideas, advice, time, and effort of many volunteers and professionals, the first unit was finally born in mid-July!

In mid-July, we decided to organize a public demo presentation for the general public.

Tsubasa Masubuchi, a university student living in a wheelchair, came to the site of the presentation and participated in the first remote control operation demonstration.

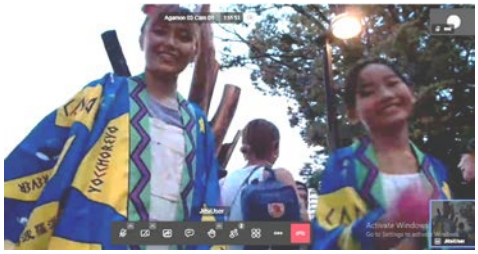
A Kochi NHK news crew also came to Tokyo and interviewed us about the purpose of this project and its potential contribution to society, which was broadcast in a special program on July 27. We were also featured in the monthly "Asakusa" magazine.

August 10 and 11 are the days of the Kochi Yosakoi festival.

Six members of the core team of the Agamon project flew from Tokyo to Kochi for that, but they could not land in Kochi Airport due to the typhoon and made a U-turn to Tokyo! From there, the overland journey began, and after a delay of two days due to the effect of the typhoon, we arrived in Kochi around noon of the last day of the festival!
From there, the assembly, testing, and adjustment of the robot began, and we could finally participate with one Agamon in the last two parades of the festival!

Though, due to problems with the Internet environment, some of the video streaming functions of the application for general operators did not work properly, we were able to accomplish the world's first Agamon to join in a Yosakoi parade with basic remote control features.

After the first Agamon made its debut at the Kochi Yosakoi, the second Agamon participated in the Harajuku Super Yosakoi Festival in Tokyo on August 27 as a spectator and cheerleader. At that time, children from as far away ais southern part of India participated, and were able to interact and photoshoot the festival atmosphere in Tokyo through live cameras.



There were many things we gained from this Yosakoi tour of the Agamons in 2023. On the technical side, we were able to realize and demonstrate various aspects of the technology required for such a remote operated robot system in the role of a teleoperated avatar. This will have a significant impact on our future improvements and developments. The Agamon project was covered by newspapers, television, and social networking services in Kochi and other parts of Japan and abroad, leading to public recognition of Agamon's existence and their potential contributions in society as a new media of connectivity.

Based on this experience and due to the voices of many fans, we are now considering an Agamon production workshop.
In addition, we are currently working on the "Tale of Agamons" manga to be released in November!
Stay tuned!

The Agamon Tour, 2023
Organized by: Remote Yosakoi Robot Executive Committee URL: https://www.creativityandintelligence.com/yosakoi2023/
Cooperation: Yosakoi team "CANAVALAVA / Canavalava" URL : https://linktr.ee/japan_carnival
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For more detailed information, please visit : contact@creativityandintelligence.com

[From the Remote Yosakoi Robot Executive Committee]