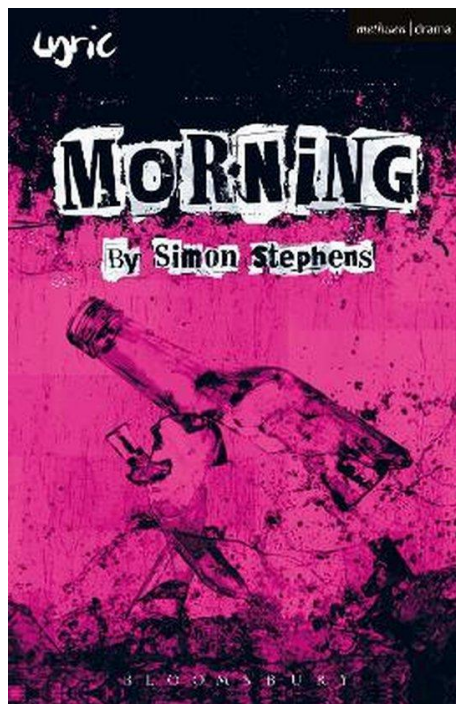
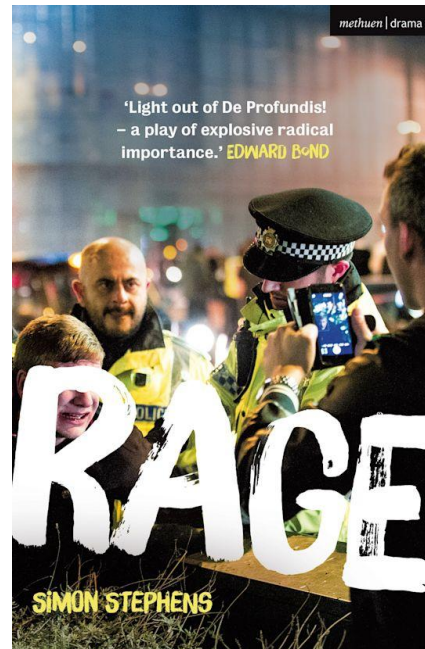
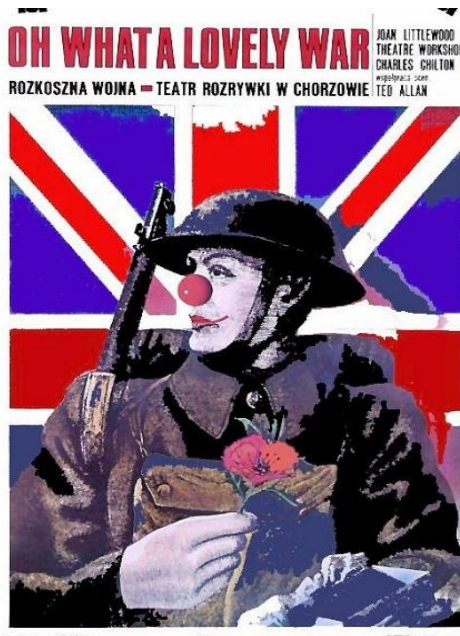


Leah Sheridan

Process Workbook

Script, Rehearsal and Performance



In this process workbook I will discuss how I have gained knowledge and insight into strengthening my acting abilities through the work of Katie Mitchell, through 'actioning' by Nick Moseley and lastly, 'Centres' by Michael Chekhov. These skills were transferred through the plays *Oh! What A Lovely War* (1963) (hereafter, *OWALW*) by Joan Littlewood, *Rage* (2018) by Simon Stephens and *Morning* (2013), also by Simon Stephens.

We, as a group, have created piece of political theatre, *'In general, Political theatre is a term applied to theatre that explicitly refers to, comments upon, or wishes its audience to intervene in political issues and events.'* (Theatre+, 2021). The idea that we are making a piece to inform people on world issues, has been the driving force for me to create something personal and important to us as a class.

- **Oh! What A Lovely War (1963) by Joan Littlewood**

I played Germany, a French soldier and an English soldier.

Through class discussion, we decided to have a 'clowning'/Slap stick style, (*"Slapstick comedy is a purposefully exaggerated form of performance that can portray a cartoonish reality. In the world of slapstick, characters are constantly getting hurt, mugging their faces, gesticulating their limbs—all with a snappy flexibility that can reset at a moment's notice* (Lawrence, 2024)) to our *OWALW* scenes, to show a direct contrast to our intense *Rage* scenes.

Research

I researched what Joan Littlewood wanted *OWALW* to represent, to help me understand the play. I think Littlewood's main intention was to make the satirical effect of the clowns make the audience reflect on the horrors of war. 'Joan dressed the soldiers as Pierrot clowns. She hated the khaki uniforms and all they stood for and wanted the audience to leave laughing at the vulgarity of war after watching the sad clowns singing humorously about their inescapable predicament' (Hartley:, 2018). For our showing we didn't have costumes, we used signs with facts from WW1, so show how Bertolt Brecht influenced us, and how we relied on our bodies to show the clowning through big, exaggerated movements, to contrast the events and effects of real-world issues.

Michael Chekhov's Centres

I applied Michael Chekhov's concept of *centres* to help me imagine where the energy in my body needed to be, and to understand where the physicality of the big clownish movements was coming from. Chekhov's centres involve imaging an energy centre in your body, *'So long as the centre remains in your chest, you will feel yourself and as if you are in full command...But as soon as you shift that centre to some other place*

within or outside your body, you will feel that your whole psychological and physical attitude will change. (Chekhov, 2020, p. 49). I decided that for grouse and mime scenes I was going to have my centres in my hands. For Germany, as my main physical move was brushing my moustache, and for mime it was to hold and clean the guns, use my hand to salute, etc.

Historic Context to my Scenes

'While grouse-hunting, which is allegorical of their remorseless killing of the soldiers, weaponry manufacturers ,and a banker – named after their countries of origin Britain, France ,Germany, America, and Switzerland – are served by a Scottish ghillie .The dialogue between two of the masters draws on historical peace negotiations between countries but exposes them for continuing the war for profit' (Stamatiou, 2022, p. 526)

I had to research the historical context to understand my characterisation of Germany. As the play was set before the treaty of Versailles, Germany had caused a lot of damage, especially to France and Britian. With this information, I was understood my character has the most power in the scene, and therefore let me embody a relaxed, high-status character.

Presentation Collages

I also created the presentation collages using photos from Maarc, James and Trystan to make slides for specific scenes. This visual supported the slap stick effect we wanted to show e.g. as we were pretending to be countries at war, there was a bomb from another war pictured in the background (SEE APPENDIX 1).

- **Rage (2018) by Simon Stephens**

BBC Documentary

At the start of the module, we were encouraged to watch the BBC documentary, *Panorama: Undercover in the Police* (Panamora: Undercover at the Police , 2025). Watching it allowed me to gain and knowledge about how the system operates, so we could approach the scenes with respect for the people who are still suffering at the hands of the police today.

Katie Mitchell

I found Katie Mitchell's preparation chapter of her book *The Directors Craft* (2009) to be useful for my *Rage* scene, 'girl who sees under the world'. *'The actor needs to imagine what is surrounding them on all sides' (of the stage). 'If a character behaves as if the things were actually there, it will allow the audiences imagination to see those places too'* (Mitchell, 2009 , p. 33). Within rehearsals, I imagined seeing the girls father's life unfolding. This helped my immediate circumstances, *'Immediate circumstances are the events that happen in the 24 hours or so leading up to the action of the scene. These events have a direct impact on the action of the scene and immediately give the actors something concrete to play'* (Mitchel, 2009, p. 44). It helped me understand the character because view of her dad became the central event when playing with the text, rather than the interaction with the two police men.

I had prepared to see the character's father dancing at his wedding earlier in the night, to make the line *'Are they still dancing?'* make sense. Creating strong images emotionally justified to the text and it makes sense that she wouldn't leave, this made the lines *'I don't need to go home'* and *'I can't leave'* clear to me.

Actioning- Nick Mosely

I read Nick Mosely's book *Actioning and How to do it* (2016) and I was particularly interested in chapter 4: *The physical dimensions of Actioning* , 'Some Verbs might suggest a move towards, and some a move away from the other character, while others suggest moves in relation to objects within the space' (Moseley, 2016, p. 38) I found the lines *'look' 'there'* and *'can't you see'* to be points of contact with police 2, because I am trying to catch his attention. To contrast, lines like *'my dad's down there' 'four years ago'* to be lines when I can move and disengage. This made my movements intentional because I had a reason to move.

Song by Sinéad O'Conner

I listen to music to help me create ideas for our showing, I was thinking of songs that would relate to *Rage* and I thought of *Black Boys on Mopeds* (1990) by Sinéad O'Connor. A moment of discovery was to suggest putting this song in the show, as it encapsulates the themes of *Rage*: brutality, discrimination and ignorance, similar to *OWALW*.

See appendix 2 for list of songs I listened to throughout the process.

- **Monologue- Morning**

For my monologue, I chose 'Morning' by Simon Stephens, see appendix 3.A for picture of it fully evented. I played the character of Stephanie.

In the play, Stephanie's mother has died. To help me prepare for a character who is grieving, I researched the stages of grief as the events and attached each section to my monologue. *'An event is the moment in action when a change occurs and this change affects everyone present'* (Mitchelle, 2009, p. 68). I did this to develop an accurate character journey.

From my own personal experience of grief, I remember flowing between each stage of grief and how a feeling of sadness can be triggered by events/ conversations that doesn't relate to the topic (environment for Stephanie). So, I had my own reaction to grief at the back of my mind without attempting to use it as a tool to evoke emotion.

Stages of Grief

According to Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying* (1969)

Stage 1: - 'Denial functions as a buffer after unexpected shocking news, allows the patient to collect himself and, with time, mobilize other, less radical defences.' (Kubler-Ross, 1969, p. 35)

Denial goes with section 1 (see appendix 3.B) because Stephanie is stopping herself from seeing all the good in the worlds due to her mother dying because it reminds her of her mother and she doesn't want to accept her mother has passed away.

Anger, stage 2 - 'When the first stage of denial cannot be maintained any longer, it is replaced by feelings of anger, rage, envy, and resentment'.

The reason for this is the fact that this anger is displaced in all directions and projected onto the environment at times almost at random.' (Kubler-Ross, 1969, p. 44)

The anger to the world is a misdirection at the anger she has for missing her mother. (see Appendix 3.C)

Phase 3: Bargaining - *'If we have been unable to face the sad facts in the first period and have been angry at people and God in the second phase, maybe we can succeed in entering into some sort of an agreement which may postpone the inevitable happening'* (Kubler-Ross, 1969, p. 72)

The character is trying to come up with ways to fix the environment. She is subconsciously thinking if she can fix the world, she can fix her mother, then she won't have to process her grief. (See appendix 3.D)

Stage 4 and stage 5: depression and acceptance - ‘The second type of depression is one which does not occur as a result of a past loss but is taking into account impending losses.’ (Kubler-Ross, 1969, p. 76).

‘Acceptance should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is almost void of feelings. It is as if the pain had gone, the struggle is over, and there comes a time for "the final rest before the long journey" as one patient phrased it.’ (Kubler-Ross, 1969, p. 100)

I have combined stages 4 and stage 5 because the ending sentence can be viewed as a combination of stages. ‘*None of it will change anything. There is only terror. There is no hope*’ (Stevens, 2012, p. 52). In terms of depression, this is a miserable way to view the world, but it is also the start of her acceptance. If she believes that nothing can be changed, I think that also means she cannot resurrect her mother. She is concluding that she is gone. (See appendix 3.E)

As this was the subtext to the monologue, I used the emotions Stephanie was feeling about her mother to show how the character felt about the world being destroyed, due to the audience not knowing the context behind the monologue.

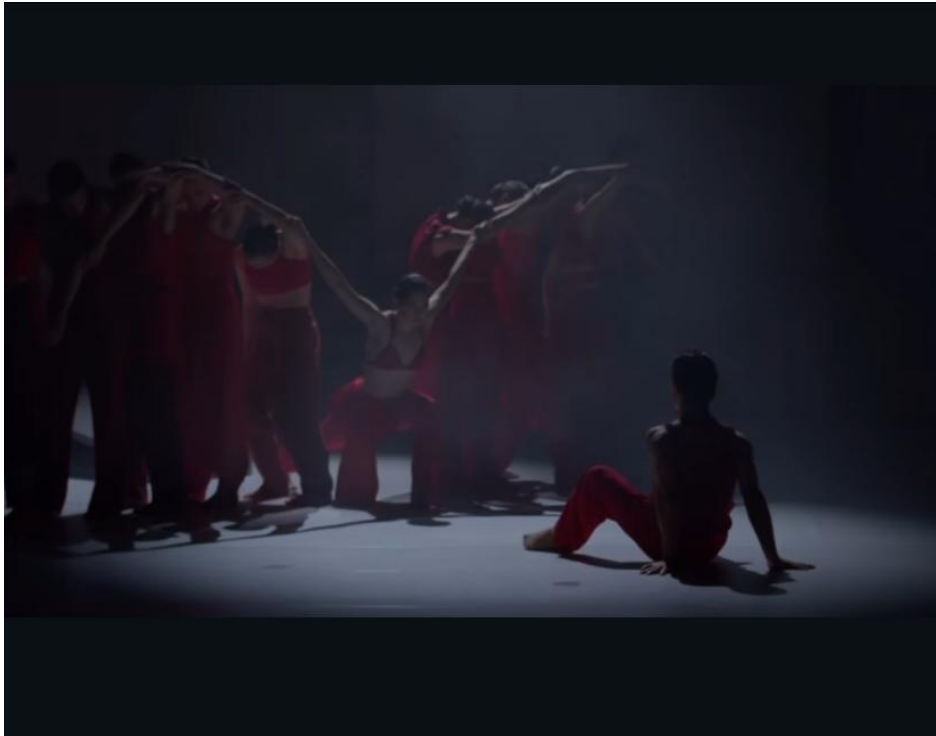
Movement in My Monologue

	<i>Weight</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Space</i>
<i>Punch</i>	Strong	Quick / Sudden	Direct
<i>Press</i>	Strong	Sustained	Direct
<i>Slash</i>	Strong	Quick/ Sudden	Flexible
<i>Wring</i>	Strong	Sustained	Flexible
<i>Flick</i>	Light	Quick / Sudden	Flexible
<i>Float</i>	Light	Sustained	Flexible
<i>Dab</i>	Light	Quick / Sudden	Direct
<i>Glide</i>	Light	Sustained	Direct

I was heavily inspired by Rudolf Laban’s *Effort Graph* (Laban, 1947). I wanted to show the nature with light movements and the people destroying it, strong movements. I did this by using the images of artists, sports, theatre etc... and got my peers in pairs and they were one of either movement and the movements getting bigger as the text went on.

I was inspired to have an image of mother nature from the choreography of Natalie Wagner on her piece *Carmen-Bolero* (Landesbuhnen, 2025). I was fascinated by a

section in the dance where a group of bodies made a bird like animal (see below). I also wanted a domino effect, due to the message of the poem relating to the domino effects of looking after nature. I used the line about moving mountains to insert an idea of the class using their bodies to make a mountain and then breathing as if the mountain was alive.



- **Evaluation of performance (200 words)**

Overall, I felt like my performance was successful. In my *OWALLW* scene, my biggest worry was keeping up the energy, I think I managed to achieve this by reacting to the other lines. In *Rage*, I was fully immersed in the scene, making the connections with my scene partners alive and great to bounce off.

Usually, when I'm performing, I cannot see the audience, so it was a change I had to very quickly adjust to. Although, when I was performing my monologue, it was great to be able to make eye contact with the audience because I was able to connect with them, I was fully present, and it did feel like I was at a therapy session. If I was to do the performance again, I would have prepared for performing in front of my peers more as it can be quite a distraction.

Regarding preparation for my monologue, this was my first time really discovering the subtext. I will use this skill in my future skills as I found exploring the root of my

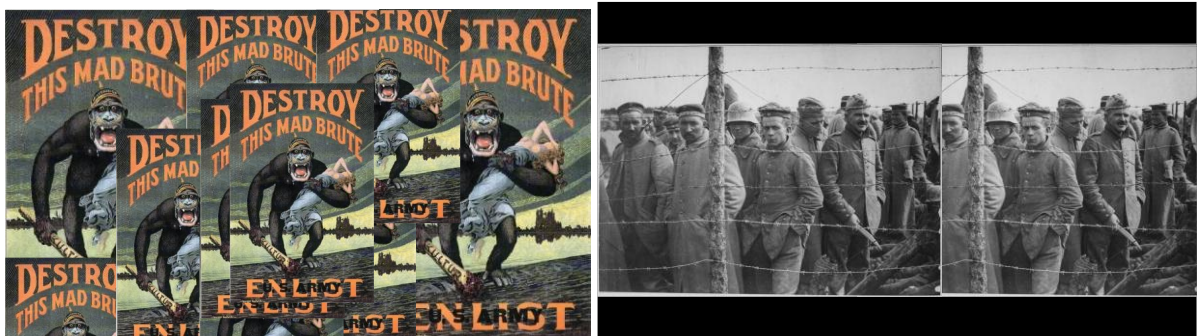
character, Stephanie's issue to be an interesting way to explore a character's inner turmoil.

If I was to do this module again, I would have gave more time to thinking about my movement piece in the performance rather than focusing on helping people create theirs and taking on their responsibility.

Appendix

Appendix 1:

Here is the link for the PowerPoint presentation. I did an art and digital media course before coming to university, so I used composition skills I learnt there to put this together. I used overlapping and repetition of some images to enhance the strength of the image. Having the same image repeated, grabs an audience's attention. As they're also slightly different compositions, it makes each image stand out.



I also made two of them look very full, busy and full of the striking images I was sent. This makes the image reflect how 'messy' and unorganised the world is today still.

These songs all represent either freedom, rebellion, community and awareness and I find listening to music that relates to the piece of theatre I am doing at the time greatly helpful to get different perspectives. I would listen to these songs on the way to class so I could start preparing myself for the specific word we did in class regarding political theatre.

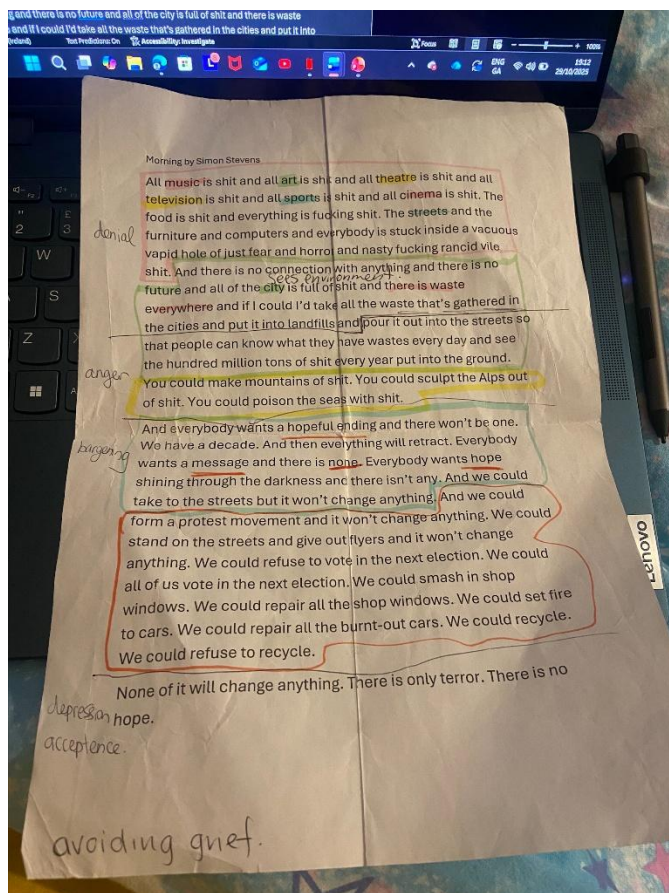
I also use music to get inspiration for movement, and I associate the sound of a song with emotions and then ideas of creation. For my monologue I listened to a lot of the album 'Producer 04' by Aquarius (Aquarius, 2002), specifically *soul searching*, from the same album. It's a mix of nature sounds, flowing soft music and then house beats influenced by the nature sounds. It doesn't have any lyrics, so I am able to focus on how the music influences by movement to then create a piece of movement.

Songs to help my creative development

- Soul Searching by Aquarius, Tayla
- Seagirl by King Krule
- The Lamp is Low by Laurindo Almeida

Appendix 3.A

Photograph of my split up Monologue. It also help to learn my lines by splitting it up by colours.



Appendix 3.B) Denial:

'All music is shit and all art is shit and all theatre is shit and all television is shit and all sports is shit and all cinema is shit. The food is shit and everything is fucking shit. The streets and the furniture and computers and everybody is stuck inside a vacuous vapid hole of just fear and horror and nasty fucking rancid vile shit. And there is no connection with anything and there is no future and all of the city is full of shit and there is waste everywhere and if I could I'd take all the waste that's gathered in the cities and put it into landfills' (Stephens, 2013, p. 51)

Appendix 3.C) Anger:

'and pour it out into the streets so that people can know what they have wastes every day and see the hundred million tons of shit every year put into the ground. You could make mountains of shit. You could sculpt the Alps out of shit. You could poison the seas with shit.' (Stephens, 2013, p. 51)

Appendix 3.D): Bargaining

'And everybody wants a hopeful ending and there won't be one. We have a decade. And then everything will retract. Everybody wants a message and there is none. Everybody wants hope shining through the darkness and there isn't any. And we could take to the streets but it won't change anything. And we could form a protest movement and it won't change anything. We could stand on the streets and give out flyers and it won't change anything. We could refuse to vote in the next election. We could all of us vote in the next election. We could smash in shop windows. We could repair all the shop windows. We could set fire to cars. We could repair all the burnt-out cars. We could recycle. We could refuse to recycle.' (Stephens, 2013, p. 52)

Appendix 3.E) Depression& Acceptance:

'None of it will change anything. There is only terror. There is no hope.' (Stephens, 2013, p. 52)

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