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Artist Statement

I believe that theatre is an art form that can share a powerful message and move an audience. Theatre can also be a form of escapism and expression. I make work to express my feelings about things I'm passionate about.

1. I want my work to entertain but have an underlying message of hope and pride.
2. I want the work I create to be realistic and relatable for the audience.
3. I want my work to tell the forgotten stories of people who wouldn't normally be recognised.
4. I want to use music to add depth and show the audience how powerful music can be.
5. I want the audience to be moved and entertained.
6. I want to take ownership for my own work and create something true to myself.
7. I want the audience to leave my performance thinking about what they've witnessed and learned so they can take a message away with them.

Initial Ideas and Influences

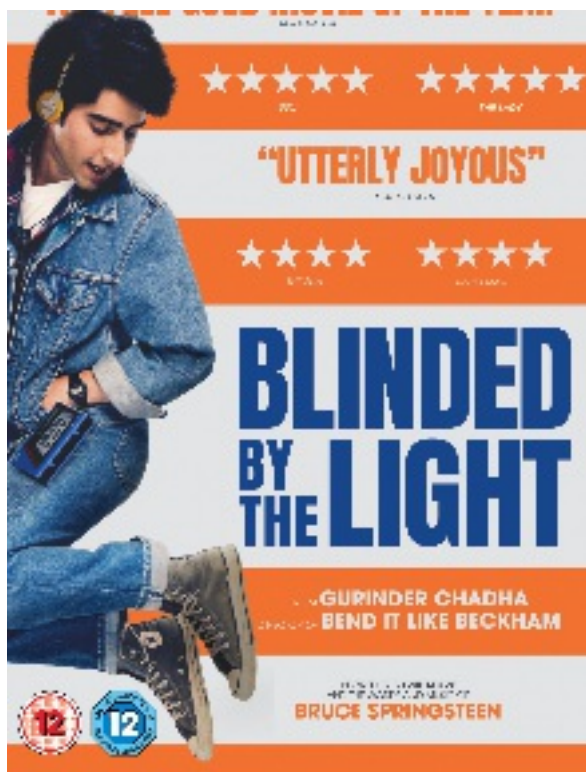
My process started with an interest in Bruce Springsteen and his music.



His music has always encompassed the issues of the working man. Springsteen's music tells a story, it sometimes tells a story of how hard life can be and how there's a struggle to see a way out of the life that's been dealt to you. Before I knew what I wanted my piece to be about, all I could come up with was that I wanted his music in it.

"The suffering and anxiety of 'Dancing in the Dark' reveal and reflect this absence of control over one's life."
(Primeaux 1996:109)

However, my initial thoughts quickly developed after watching the film *Blinded by the Light*. This film uses Springsteen's lyrics to tell the story of a boy in the 1980's trying to make it through life in an area where times were hard. I decided I wanted to create my own version of this but focus on the working class community in the north east of England in the 80s. Even though my ideas changed and the piece no longer has a strong connection to Springsteen, I still wanted to talk about the influence of Springsteen as I came up with the idea for my piece based on his music. Like *Blinded by the Light*, I had to believe in my piece to make it come to life. "First you talk about a dream, and then you try to make it real" (Ehrlich 2019).



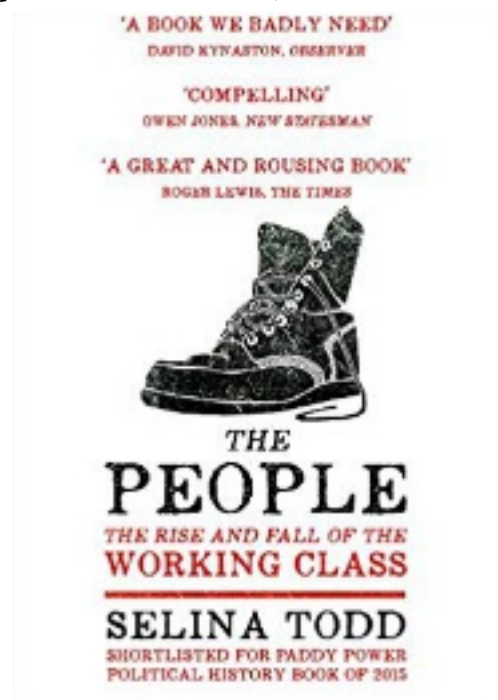
"I check my look in the mirror.
Wanna change my clothes, my
hair, my face. Man, I ain't
gettin' nowhere I'm just livin' in
a dump like this. There's
somethin' happenin' somewhere
Baby, I just know that there is"
- Bruce Springsteen, Dancing in
the Dark, 1984.

Another influence for me was the film Billy Elliot, even though this film mainly focuses on a boy's passion for ballet, it has undertones of political themes from the time period such as the miners strike and music from the time period. Despite my initial ideas starting with only wanting to include the music of Bruce Springsteen in the piece, I soon realised it would add so much more to my performance if I used a variety of music from the era.

I used a few different films, articles and books as stimulus for the performance and even though my piece has progressed from that point, all of the beginning items helped me get to the point I'm now at.



One of the things I took the biggest amount of inspiration from was a book called *The people - The Rise and Fall of the Working Class* by Selina Todd. This book charts the history of working class people. I specifically focused on the section about the 1980s and the 'Margaret Thatcher years'. It not only focused on the wide scale of how the strikes affected everyone and unemployment on a whole, but on individual people and their personal stories from the time, which I found extremely inspiring and interesting. "The miners showed that the real division in 1980s Britain was between the minority of the very rich who could afford private housing, healthcare and education, and the majority who relied on work to get by and whose security was increasingly precarious" (Todd 2015: 326).



"Unemployment rose to 10 per cent by 1982, with young people and adult men being particularly vulnerable" (Todd 2015: 320).

Why did I choose the North?

I chose to base *The Miner's Arms* in the north east of England as I'm from the north east and even though I have moved away from my home town I will always be passionate about where I come from and the history of the north east. I believe that there has always been a stigma attached to the north east, it's sometimes seen as underdeveloped, left behind and forgotten about. I want the stories and the people of the north to be remembered and talked about. In the 1980s one of the biggest problems was unemployment, in 1984, the north east suffered greatly as the mining strike came into force. I want to highlight the bad times but also shine a light on how community was (and still is) a huge part of the north eastern community.

England's North East

Culture, Heritage, Places, People, Life



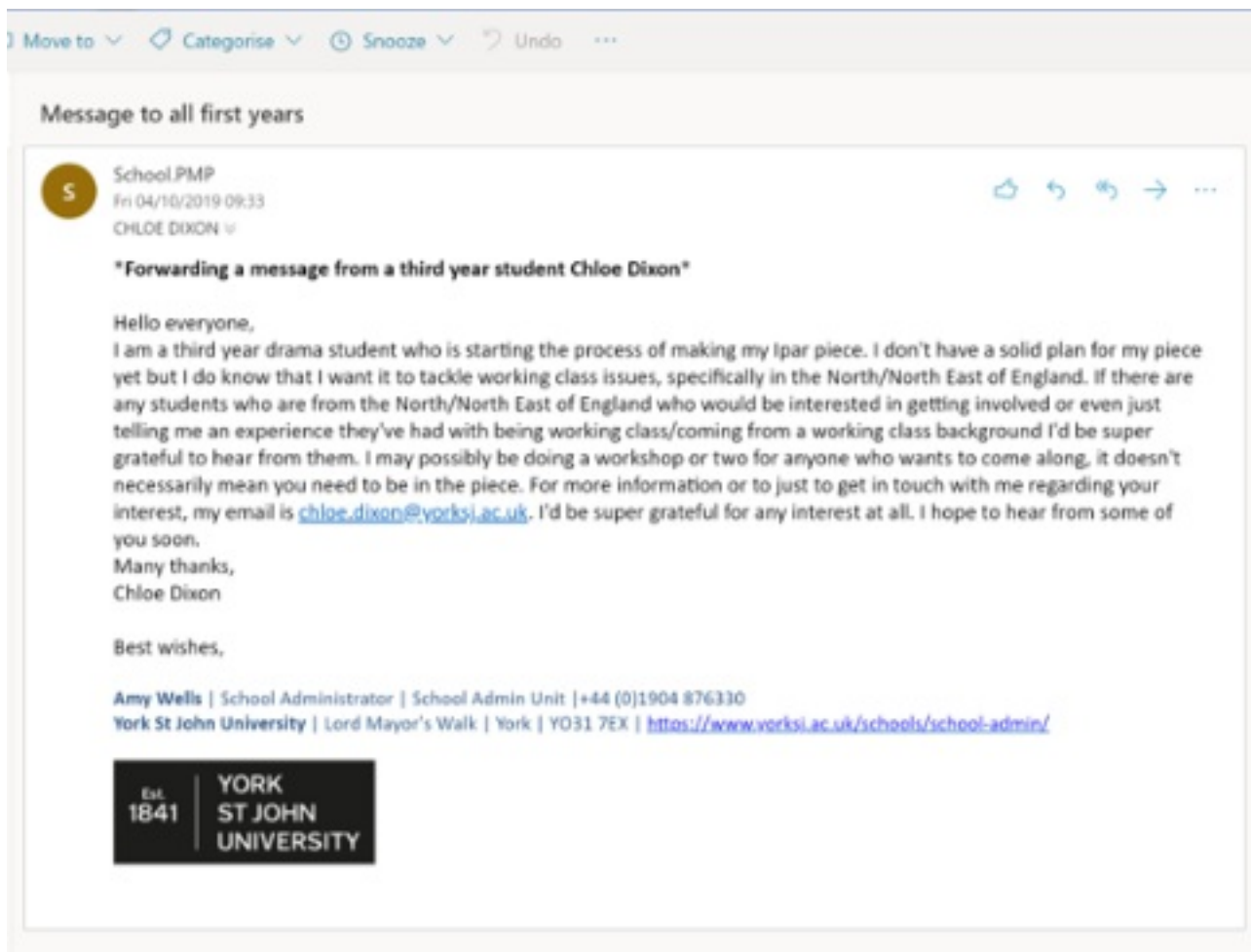
Struggles - Directing, Writing, Acting

I have found this process extremely difficult. I noticed that I found it hard to take ownership of my piece, I didn't know how to take control and make decisions about the piece. This takes me back to a module I took in level 2 of the course, the module was choreography, site and environment, in this module I had to create a completely solo piece of work which I found difficult. However it has prepared me for this module as I made sure I didn't make the same mistakes in this module. Using techniques from previous modules and new ideas, I remedied my problem by reading up on devising techniques and creating work. By doing this I realised I just needed to go for it and get started and once I started creating material it was an easier process. To further continue to creative process I wrote a script for myself and my cast, writing a script was one of the hardest parts of the process but rather than sitting and thinking about the content too much I just started the 'writing to think' process and went with my creative flow.

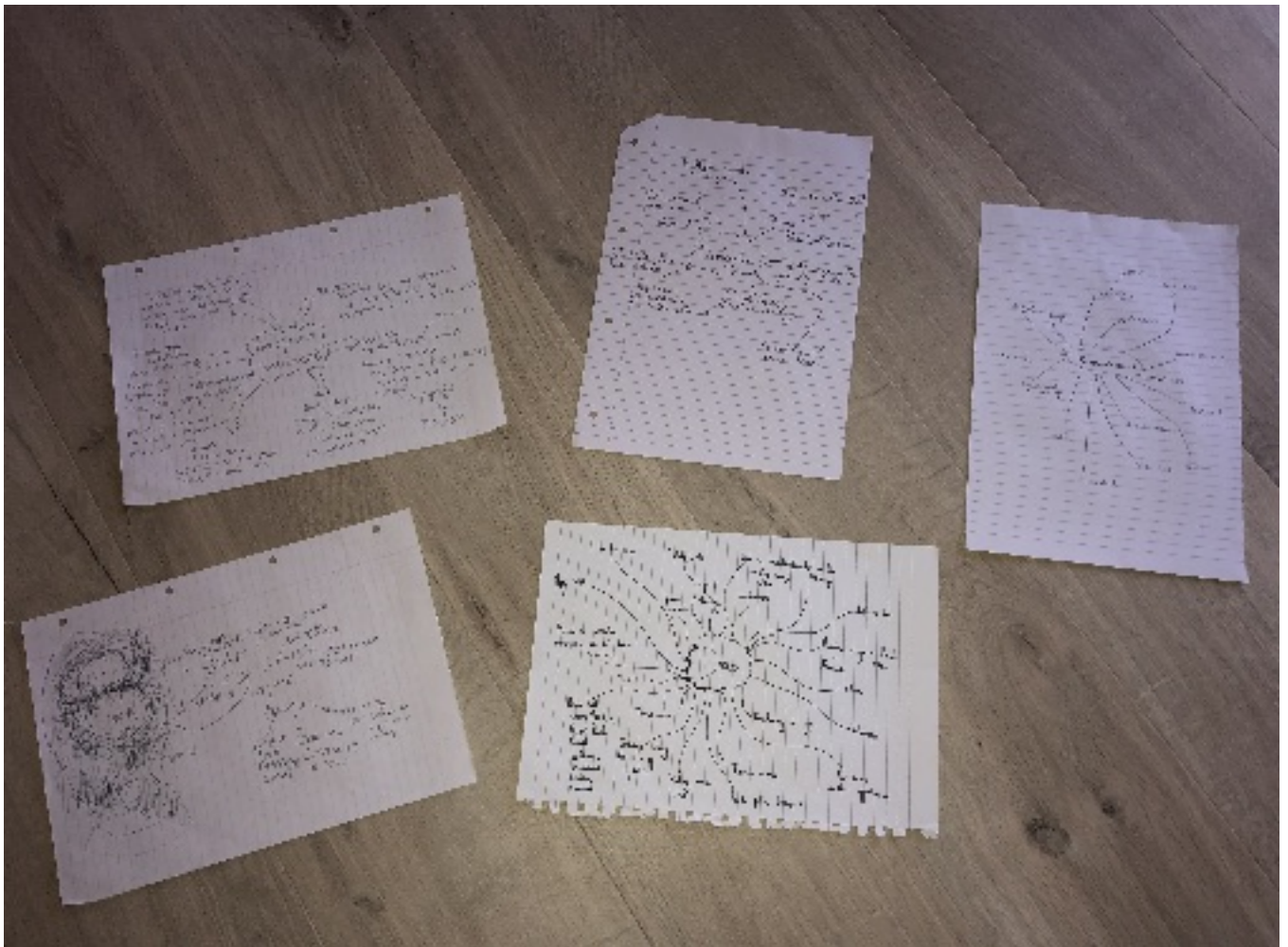
This is the first performance that has been completely my own, I have never been in charge of a piece of theatre, I have never written an entire script for a piece of theatre and I have never directed a cast of people for a piece of theatre. This was a completely new process for me and it was definitely a struggle but I believe this means seeing the end result will be all the more valuable because of this.

Rehearsal Process

At the start of the process I decided I wanted a cast so I sent out a group email to all first year students on my course. In the email I asked for students from the north/north east to get in touch if they were interested.



As a first activity with my cast I asked each person to write the place they were from on some paper and mind-map around it anything that place made them think of.



Throughout the process of rehearsals I utilised techniques to create content and characters with my cast. Together with my cast I created an opening scene and started creating more action rather than just talking. The process was slow to start with as I found it difficult to get into the swing of being in charge of a rehearsal. I soon realised I needed to bring with me a plan of what I wanted to happen in the space instead of hoping something would just happen when we got there. To combat this feeling of being lost in the space I spoke to my group at the beginning of the session about what I wanted to achieve and got out any ideas either I or any of my cast had, then we put the ideas into motion and created scenes. One of the things I did at first was give my cast the opportunity to develop their own characters by writing a monologue for that character about a subject their character was passionate about, this created a stimulus for each scene and an order to write into the script. Having a script made things a lot easier as once the written side of things was complete it was easier for the action to become part of the performance.



Set and Aesthetic

I chose to set my piece in an old looking pub as I believe a pub is sometimes the heart of a community. I wanted the pub to be the hub where all of the drama, happy times, sad times and everything in between are talked about by the regulars who are always there. There's a monologue where the landlady in the performance talks about how everyone in the pub is just like one big dysfunctional family. This is the feeling I wanted to portray with my set and my cast. "People who said they have a 'local' or those who patronise small community pubs appear to have more close friends on whom they can depend for support, are more satisfied with their lives and feel more embedded in their local communities than those who said they do not have a local pub" (Dunbar 2016).

Pictured to the right is a mock-up of the set at the beginning of the process.



The End Result

At the end of this process my end goal is to achieve everything I've set out in my artist statement. At this point in the process I'm extremely close to the end of the journey of creating the world in which The Miner's Arms fits in. I understand that because my piece hasn't been staged or performed in front of an actual audience yet I can't comment on if the piece will be a success. I want the piece to tell an interesting story and my ideas to come across well within in my set. I want my end goal to be to make sure my piece has a balance between naturalistic dialogue and scenes and some abstract realism to utilise the skills I've learnt in my time on the course.

Overall I hope my end product is a piece well balanced with dialogue, movement, music and a sense of community that everyone finds informative and fun to watch.

Things I'd do differently

If I was to start this process over and do it all again there are definitely things I would change about how I approached things.

I would change how well I utilised the techniques I'd learned from past modules so I could come up with ideas quicker.

I would come to rehearsals with a solid plan for my cast and take control of the group, making sure things got done on time and the group was fully focused in rehearsals.

I still think I'd find it difficult to start this process over again, I think I could improve upon my creative process but I still would not be able to fully complete this task with ease. Truthfully, I would not rush to try this process again.

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Image 1 - Springsteen in concert sourced from

<https://www.xpincerewind.co.uk/songstats.php?songid=3872>

Image 2 – Blinded by the Light front cover sourced from

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Blinded-by-the-Light-DVD/dp/B07VLHPTGH>

Image 3 – North East photo sourced from

<https://englandsnortheast.co.uk/2019/01/10/north-east-culture-creativity-connections/>

Image 4 – Stimulus Photo sourced from my Iphone camera roll

Image 5 – The People Book sourced from

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/People-Rise-Working-Class-1910-2010/dp/1848548826>

Image 6 – Screenshot of email sourced from my email account online

Image 7 – Mind-map photo sourced from my Iphone camera roll

Image 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 – Rehearsal photos sourced from my Iphone camera roll

Image 13 and 14 – Set photos sourced from my Iphone camera roll