



# T@pp Fest Online Walk By Cameron Ferguson

Just



## What is T@pp Fest

T@pp Fest is an event that takes place each year at the University of Salford amongst the performing arts second year students. A number of amazing directors with a performance idea involve the students to performed their work usually in the New Adelphi Theatre to a live audience. Each one is normally part of a week long theatre festival. But of course during these unprecedented times the all participants had to adapt to the new lockdown measures that were introduced in the UK shifting all work online. This is how my group "Just Walk" led by Carran Waterfield accomplished this task

## Working upon the project

### What we achieved in the first 3 weeks



1 - An E-flyer that was made by our visual design creators

When work first began upon this project I was extremely nervous with how we were going to achieve a theatre piece about walking in an online setting. How would we execute the filming of our walks, and how could we make our piece interesting for the audience through cinematography and our individual stories.



2 - A photo of our brilliant director Carran Waterfield

### Our first lesson together

In our first lesson together our director Carran told us that this work and these pieces would be very individual, and that we as performers had almost complete control over the subject and how it would be made. With such a blank canvas I was extremely excited and also nervous, this was a very open project and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to produce something of merit.

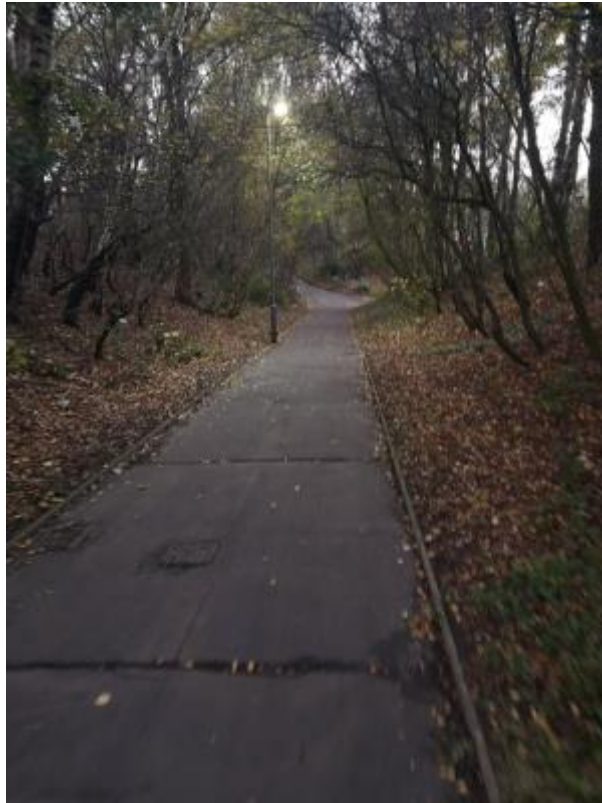
We started the day by doing a full body scan while our director Carran said "I am here" "I am going" "I am walking" "I have arrived" The purpose of this was to highlight the subtle movements our body

makes, and how your face and body language convey the walk we are doing in our heads. While I found this concept difficult to get into at the beginning, I did find my fingers twitching when Carran said "I am walking" This made me realise that when my mind thinks it is walking my body wants to move or grab something.

Continuing on from this we talked about what could affect a person's walk, like their identity, location, and clothing. This resonated with me, I myself have realised from as early as high school I would prefer to wear my trainers rather than my school shoes as they gave me greater confidence. We then build up a vocabulary of the different types of walks:

- Religious walks
- Spiritual
- Pilgrimage
- Wondering
- Family connections

We were then asked to go out on a walk and find what our body was naturally attracted to. I found myself naturally gravitating to the quiet side of the road and waiting at a bus stop, I have a lot of memories just sitting at them in contemplation. I also discovered that my body would naturally move to the beat of the music I was listening to, and when I was somewhere quiet I nearly always take off my headphones and listen to the wind in the trees. After feeding back this information to the class we were asked to do the walk again and take some photos on our phone of what we were naturally attracted to by our body's movements.



*3 - Photos from my second walk when asked to take photos of what my body is naturally attracted to.*







## Over the following weeks

As the weeks progressed we began to explore our body's movements with a number of different exercises, for example Carran would make us walk around our room but having our feet lead us. This for me it felt like my feet had become sentient and were just moving where they wanted to go. Along with this we were told to come to a natural stop, I could really feel my feet gripping down upon the carpet in my room as if my feet had to hold themselves still.

We also did multiple exercises around the rooms that we were stuck in, such as reach and following the angle, point at lines in the room that we could see, and we also worked on the nine motions.

- Lying down
- Sitting
- kneeling
- standing
- walking
- jump
- stretching
- Crawling
- lifting up

With these nine motions we were told to use them to find creative ways around our room. In a short performance in small breakout room I found myself becoming very mechanical. We were also asked to go out on a walk and try to use these movements on our walk. Whilst I struggled with this in the open I found myself being very capable of creating a movement piece around my room using these nine motions. Another great exercise was to do our whole walk performance piece in the confines of our room, and I found myself remembering key events and places on my walk in great detail while doing this.

Every time we did a new inside exercise we would always be asked to follow this with an outside walk and use the exercise outcomes to see what we would create/find and take photos and videos along the way. While I was enjoying all of the exercises I was struggling to find what my walk story would be about. My Eureka moment came when during one lesson when we were asked to find three small objects of significant meaning, make a list of places you have been, and create a life story of locations whilst thinking about your family, picking one parent and going 5 generations back to discover their names and where they lived. When we had our next lesson we were asked to take the three objects that we had chosen and place them around our room in interesting spots, and look at them again from different angles to see what difference context and perspective would give these objects and how it would change them or tell a story, I found this exercise to be quite strange and difficult at first but once I got into the rhythm of it I found myself really experimenting with the objects using my desk light to create shadows and combining my other objects together to create something new. Once again we were asked to head outdoors with these same objects and take pictures of them in varying locations. I discovered that I was constantly trying to create a story with these objects with both location and angle of shot.

We then did an exercise with the list of places that had great meaning in our life, to pick five and place them in different spots around our room in the order of how far away these places are from one and other. Then go to each of them in order of distance, and then in the chronological order that we visited them and then in the order in which our body was attracted to. While doing this I found myself creating a route, a certain path, that I kept repeating. It was almost like I was creating a new walk in my own bedroom.



*4 - This is an example of my work in my university room looking at low and high points*



*5 - we were asked to go outside and find lines and angles that we could see*



*6 - Lines and angles*



*7 - When out on a walk we were asked to take photos of anything that stopped us*



8 - Stopping image



9 - Stopping image



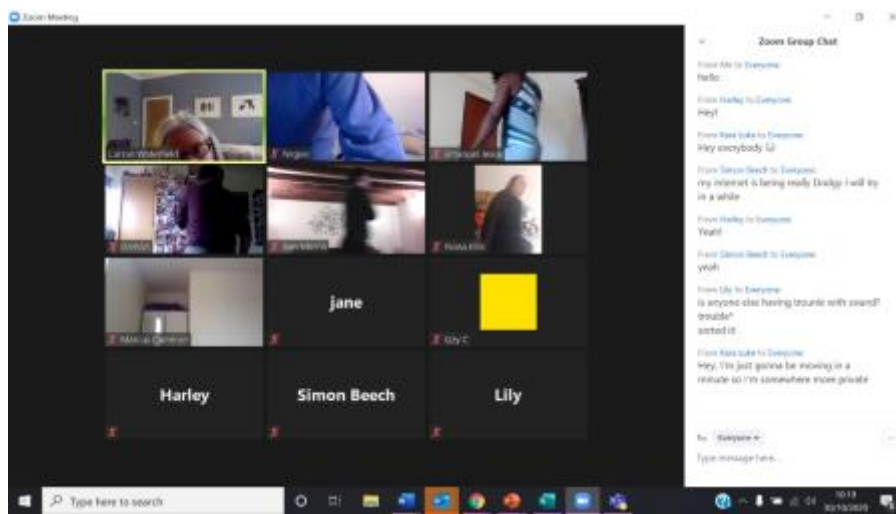
10 - Stopping image



11 - Lines and angle



12 - This is an image of focusing upon the small and finding the detail

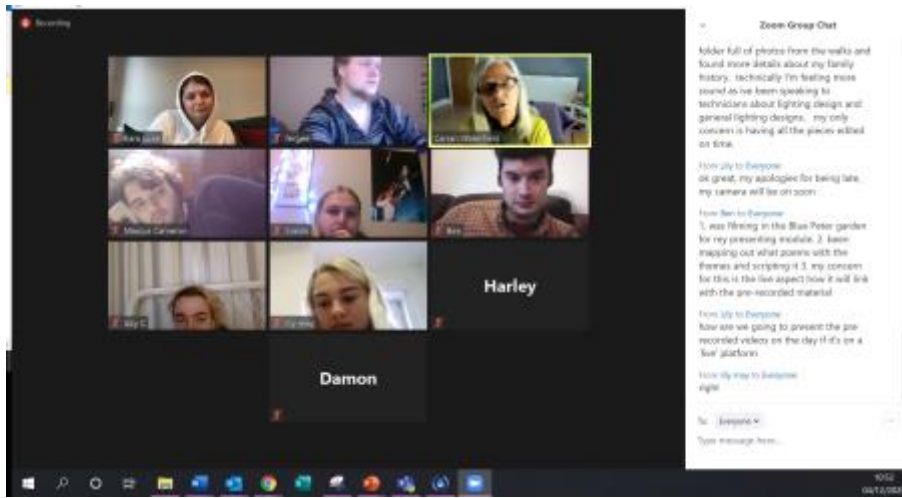


13 - Us walking around our room letting our feet guide us

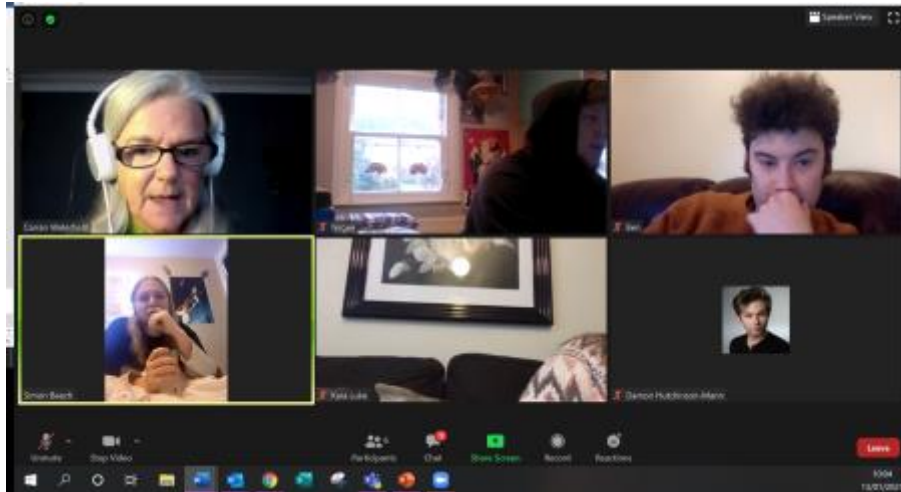




14 - Doing our walks in our head



15 - Carran showing us how to use the nine motions in a practical way



16 - Back at home going over our walk ideas and how we are going to execute them

## Some short videos

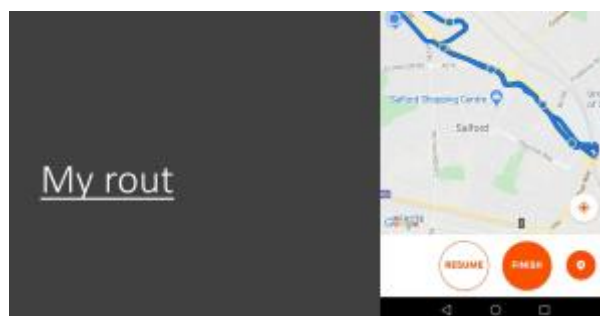
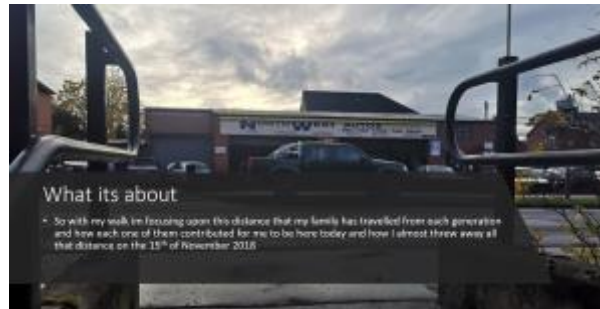
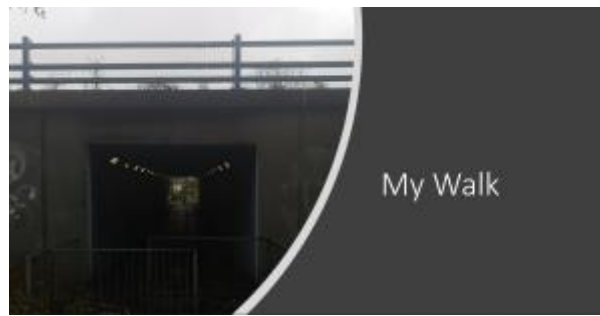
### What is the reason for these?

We were capturing videos like this to show the Director that we were getting a grasp of the techniques that she was instructing us to use and also to experiment with camera angles, position and focus. This was all great experience and helped to give us an idea of what we could capture for our final project.





# Presenting our ideas





During our time in rehearsal we only had two actual in person lessons, one of which I couldn't attend. In the second one Carran our director asked us to prepare a presentation about our walk for everyone to see, along with photos of landmarks that we encounter on the walk with a map of the path we were taking.

This for me was a amazing as up until then we only had snippets of information of what the other performers concepts were, and for us all to gather our ideas. What we had so far really put my mind at ease, as this project was very open to interpretation and being able to see what others had planned let me know that the direction I was going with my piece was a good one.

Not only this but after each individual shared their presentation we then went on a five minute walk in a pair picking a new partner each time to discuss what we had seen and what we like about it, furthermore these short five minute walks really helped me stay focused on each individuals presentation even though Carran had said that all this information in a short space of time could make it hard to focus..

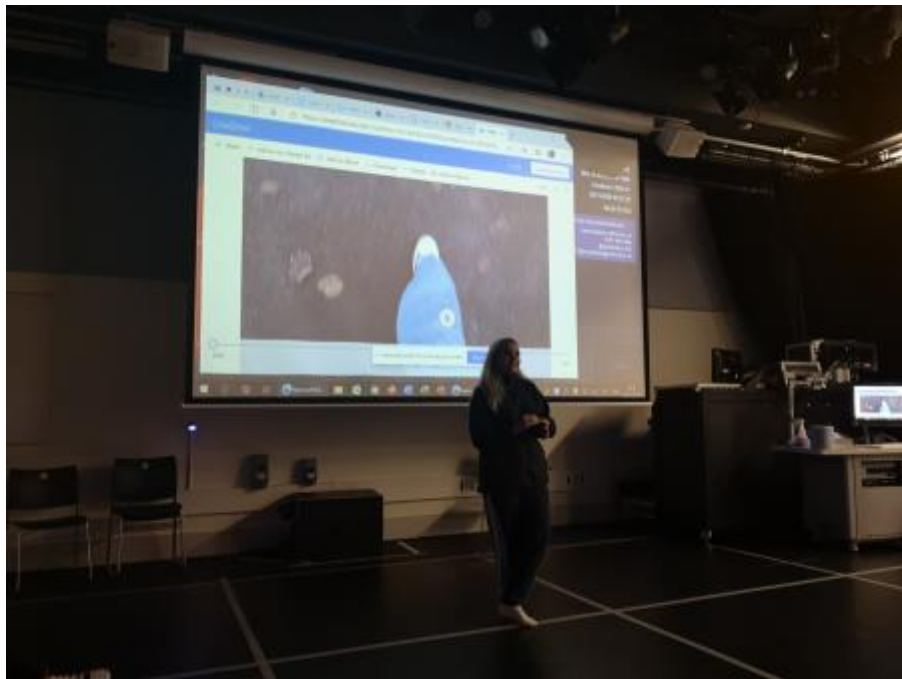
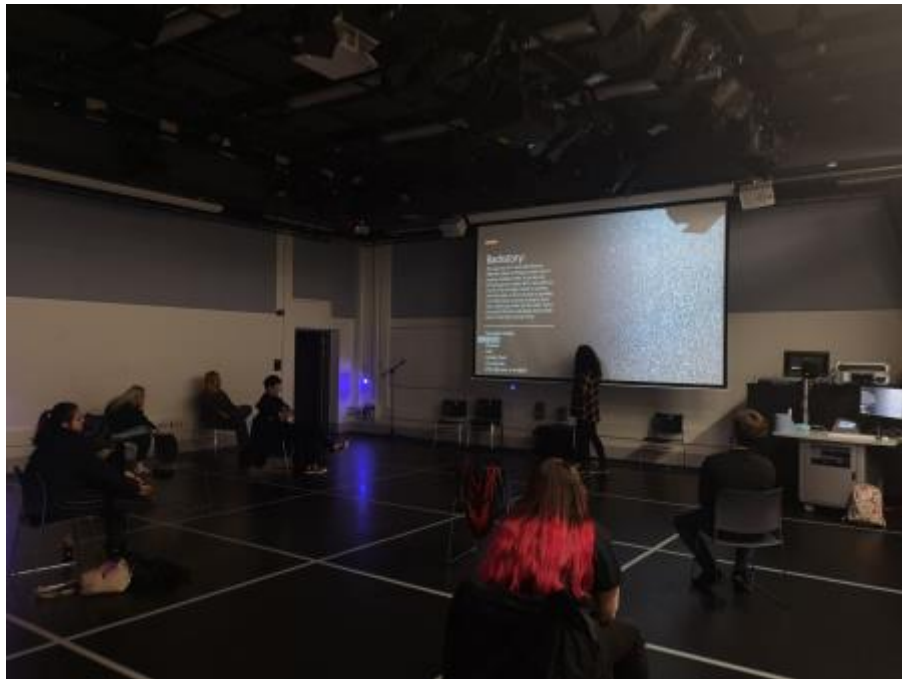
From this we were also able to make a rough running order for the show, and after seeing each individuals presentation we could tell that it should be split into three sections with each one having a close relation to the performances taking place. For example my group was section two and our work all contained strong themes of suicide, abuse, and family.



*17 - Photos of us presenting our walks.*









## My inspiration for my walk

Some inspiration for my work definitely came from two pieces of original work that the Director Carran Waterfield introduced us to, *Follow the Stone* (2020) and *Little Blue man* (2015). In *Follow the Stone* I found myself amazed at how Carran was able to create great focus and a story about a simple stone. I found myself taking the concept and creating my own story from it. What I concluded was that we humans are like stones, we have been around for thousands of years evolving on this planet each one of us living for a very short time in the history of the species, but the species is the constant just like a stone perched on a hillside. Carran also talked about the stone as a representation of life, and she then went on to a monologue about, for me at least, how the land has changed and what new things appear amongst the small bits of information left behind from others who have travelled this way. As the monologue went on, she then said something which really resonated with me "what's it about? It's about now" All throughout this performance I found myself thinking back to the one's who came before me, the "stones" of my family's past and the "stones" of memories past, and how they have shaped me. I realised that sometimes carrying these stones can do more damage than good, and I had always looked back at my attempted suicide as a bad thing, something that I tried to destroy and distance myself from. As I have gotten older I've learned to let go of this memory not as a bad thing but as a turning point in my life, when I began to improve in myself. Now while all these people that came before me have shaped me to where I am today I know it is important to appreciate the "stones" of the past, but equally important is moving forward into the now whilst hoping as time passes that I might be the "stone" of someone else's life helping them along their path. All of this soul searching and deeper thinking really ignited the creative spark as I found a path to focus on, but not only that it gave me an idea of how I would approach my script.

Not only did *Follow the Stone* inspire me with my work but so did a piece called *Little Blue Man* (2015), in which Carran takes us on a journey of her late father's life and the man he used to be, the places he used to go, the jobs he had, and the activity's he used to do. While watching this I found

myself becoming very emotional even crying as I saw my own mother playing Carran and her father as my mother's mum and how she struggled with the slow deterioration of her and how she remembers everything about her. With this performance I found myself wanting to perform my family's past not only just capturing footage of me walking and then talking over it but having the audience come along with me upon this journey of my family's past, it also gave me more confidence with my idea to present my Irish family in an Irish accent.



18 - An image from *Follow the Stone* Waterfield, C. (2020, 3 February). *Follow The Stone* 2020 development work. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7259449>



19 - An image from *Follow the Stone* Waterfield, C. (2020, 3 February). *Follow The Stone* 2020 development work. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7259449>



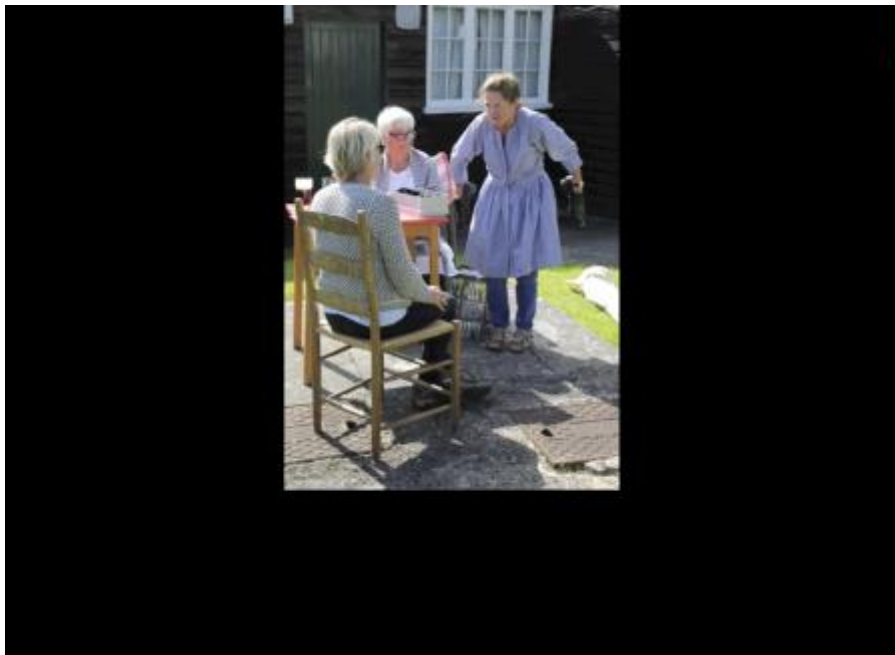
20 - An image from *Follow the Stone Waterfield, C.* (2020, 3 February). *Follow The Stone 2020* development work. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7259449>



21 - An image from *Follow the Stone Waterfield, C.* (2020, 3 February). *Follow The Stone 2020* development work. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7259449>



22 - An image from *Little Blue Man* Waterfield, C. (2020, 3 February). *Body of Work: Little Blue Man 2012-2015*. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7899581>



23 - An image from *Little Blue Man* Waterfield, C. (2020, 3 February). *Body of Work: Little Blue Man 2012-2015*. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7899581>



24 - An image from *Little Blue Man Waterfield, C.* (2020, 3 February). *Body of Work: Little Blue Man 2012-2015.* [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7899581>

## How I did my Walk

My first idea for the walk was that I would be performing spoken word about the pain of Manchester, and how you could see it in the buildings and the people and what the lockdown had done to the city, but as time moved on I changed my idea to focus on my family's past and the distance that they have travelled and the individual miles for each of them with a bit of back story. But alas I had to change my idea and script as I got stuck at home over Christmas due to the new lockdown restrictions I had to re-plan my walk, locations and landmarks.

To help make my script I sat down with my Dad and interviewed him on his past relatives, having him recollect as much as possible, where they lived, places they worked, and any fun or interesting facts about them. While this was useful I didn't really have enough to talk about only, a few snippets of information and certainly not enough to make a script. I then phoned my Grandad in Northern Ireland and asked if I could interview him, and he duly obliged filling in the missing detail.

After I got all of my information, I then worked out the distance from where each person I was going to talk about lived to where I live today. The only exception to this was my Dad, as he had been in the Royal Navy I asked him to recollect as many places he had visited and used his combined "sea miles." I did this as he had met my mum whilst in the Navy and it seemed appropriate. Once I had all my information, I began to make my script. Each relative would begin with their full name, then the miles they had travelled, followed by some information about their life. I did this in chronological order of oldest through to my Dad to emphasise the journey.

With all my information finally collected into my script I then had to pick my locations, but with all of my original one's being in Manchester I had to adapt my script and shots to the new location of my home Village Helsby. With time being tight, and only being able to shoot on the weekends (as my family worked till 5 and daylight would be gone by then) I had to change how I would transition to and from each shot. I remembered a show I used to watch called The Fast Show (1994) and how they would maintain continuity from changing locations with a continual dialogue and the use of a quick pan to blur the camera. I ended up using both of these as I wasn't able to get all the original transitions I wanted. While these new transitions turned out really well, and gave a great flow to my work, I do think if I had more time my other shot ideas would have been more visually appealing.

Another thing I wanted to do where possible when talking about a relative was for there to be something in the background which would could relate to the words being spoken about them. With Jean McGuinness I made sure to have a body of water in the background as she used to live by a lake, and with Matthew Ferguson I made sure that there was some animals in the background as he used to look after a lot of animals.

Once I had all of my footage I used Sony Vegas Pro to edit all of my footage together. Once the final version of it was complete I showed it to my director Carran and she said that it was something that she imagined/hoped that people would create when talking about family and the past.



*25 - An image from my video 150 508 miles*



*26 - An image from my video 150 508 miles*



*27 - An image from my video 150 508 miles*



*28 - An image from my video 150 508 miles*



*29 - An image from my video 150 508 miles*



*30 - An image from my video 150 508 miles*



*31 - An image from my video 150 508 miles*

## Digital engagement

At the start of the project we were all told that as this would be our performance, and we would have a choice of roles to take on during the project namely Assistant Director, Venue Liaison, Digital Engagement Assistant, Visual Design Creator and Technical Theatre Coordinator.

After hearing this we allocated roles in our group chat as to what roles we would like. Myself Kara and Ben all chose to be part of the digital engagement team, and we had weekly team briefings with our team Leader Ashley Cox. In our first lesson together we were told that in our digital engagement team there would be three sub roles that we could take, the biz man, the pap, and the narrator. We were told that with these it could be an individual role or a collaboration, we chose to work very collaboratively with one and other.

The main function of our team was to create social media posts for our show to raise awareness. We also had to make sure that the content matched the theme of our show and that our team and the visual design creators, along with the assistant director, all worked together making sure our output was coherent with the others teams involved.

With this role our team had to create a social media timeline of our ideas, what we wanted to post and highlight, and the dates on which our content would go live. Once we had made a final decision on timeline and concept content we then had to go and create content or work with other people in the group to complete material. For example I created a short video of everyone in our Just Walk group walking past the camera with just their feet on show. The footage was edited so it seemed like as one walked off frame the journey continued with a different person from the group. Along with this we also got photos of people's feet together, background images of us working, and photos of editing software. We wanted this as our performance was very individual, and we wanted to tease the audience with what was to come as to hopefully entice the audience more by only giving away snippets of information.

We also created a post of our headshots as one of the final things to be realised, in order to keep the identity of each performer secret until very close to the show. With each of these images and videos we had to upload them to a shared document, where our digital engagement team leader Ashlee Cox would then take them and put them on the main Instagram account and social media accounts. To help this go smoothly we had to ensure that all of our images were square and sized correctly so to fit the post created.

We also had two Instagram "takeover days" in which we were given the password to the University of Salford performance Instagram page and were allowed to post anything pertaining to our performance. Kara took charge of this and we all decided that our first one would be a live streamed walk for half an hour followed by a Q&A in which Kara would answer questions. Our second takeover day saw us doing the same things with headshots being posted at the end.

To gather all of this content was extremely difficult at times as each individual in the group was doing different tasks. Normally at the end of every lesson I made sure to remind my fellow classmates about the content that we required and I also worked closely with our assistant director Marcus ensuring he knew where my team were up to on all content and recruiting him to reinforce the deadline message.

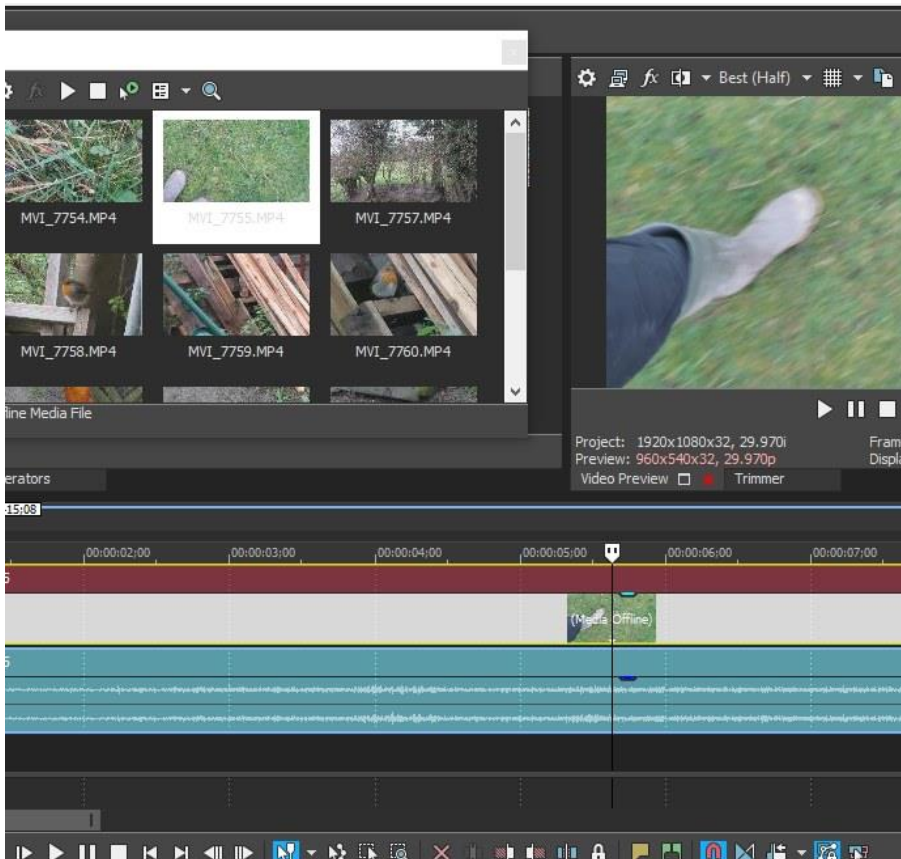
Ben, Izzy and myself were chosen to collect and combine all of our relevant group's footage into one. This then was sent to our assistant Director Marcus for review before again sending on to our technical experts Joshua Tomalin and Hannah Briggs for final show compilation. As part of the final show I was asked to create content for the interlude, the content of which was time to curtain up and Q&A reminders.



32 - An image from one of our digital engagement meetings.



33 - Here are some of the BTS images that me and my team had created to post on the university Instagram page for our show.





## The Final Show

On show day I was extremely excited, not just for me but for my friends and other members of TAPP, to finally watch what we had all created. Whilst I wouldn't be able to review the show in a conventional way, of individual live performances, I would be able to look at what we had made in testing times and review it all as a collective performance. While each individual's work was very strong, either as a story, the cinematography or the creative choices made, I do feel that if a little more effort had been made on the transitional shots between each performance it could have allowed for the audience to digest each one for slightly longer whilst teasing what was to come. Another element which I think could have been explored more is a change of pace. Each piece seemed to go at the same pace and I just feel an injection of pace may have added to the interest. Whilst some things we couldn't fix, like Zoom lowering the visual quality of the videos, I think the use of the Q&A at the end was a great addition to allow for questioning of choices and how we arrived with the finished material. In conclusion I am extremely proud of what my group made and the creative process undertaken, this work for me was so individual and intriguing I will remember this experience and treasure the fact that I got the opportunity to work with such an incredibly creative and supportive director.

## Bibliography

Waterfield, C. (2020, 3 February). Body of Work: Little Blue Man 2012-2015. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7899581> Waterfield, C. (2020, 3 February). Follow The Stone 2020 development work. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/showcase/7259449>