



## Just Walk - Marcus Cameron



*1 - Our Poster for the performance*

## The Concept



### Introduction

The concept of Just Walk stemmed from a piece named "Follow The Stone" that our director, Carran Waterfield, devised during the first lockdown. In the piece, it focuses on walking in a space and giving it meaning. What is the purpose for your walk? What do you do as you're on your journey? What will you discover?

All of these questions gave the group ideas for their own pieces. The ultimate concept overall became having each performer devise their own original piece, giving a sense of originality to what we wanted to showcase as a group. All would become clear when we began the process.

Our group was divided into sub-groups towards the end of the process, and each sub-group had a certain theme or atmosphere to them. My sub-group ended up with pieces that felt somewhat abstract but with an overall positive vibe from the three of them.

Despite this, the concept for the whole group stayed more or less the same throughout the process, though different ideas changed as we started to develop the piece.



2 - *Just Walk's* director, Carran Waterfield

### Theatrical Influences

As mentioned, the piece was inspired by [Follow The Stone by Carran Waterfield](#). However, the influences extend from that. The influence of the walking in a theatrical setting comes from a Javanese practitioner called Suprpto Suryodarmo, who created the technique known as Amerta. [Amerta](#) is an exploratory approach to free movement, frequently used in some aspects of holistic therapy. However, there has been transference and application to theatre since its development.

One practitioner that influenced our director in this regard was [Sandra Reeve](#). Reeve's technique is heavily inspired by Amerta and focuses on the type of meditative movement Amerta is known for. We focused primarily on the semi-meditative state of walking and the exploration of this technique was interesting.

For my own personal influences, I explored the techniques of Anne Bogart & Tina Landau's Viewpoints in relation to these. Particularly regarding tempo and duration. Though they didn't show up explicitly regarding the walking element of my piece, they still played a fundamental part in my own personal devising process.

My piece also featured karate. The particular type of karate I used in my piece was Shukokai, but also elements of Shōrin-ryū and Matsubayashi-ryū karate. Both old Okinawan forms of karate. This was perhaps more obvious in my piece than the use of Viewpoints.

## The Process



### The Exercises

The process began when we all first met as a group, in person. We went through a couple of different practical exercises throughout our sessions. We learnt how to understand how different parts of the body feel when walking. I found this interesting as I had learnt different things about my body in this process. For example, I noticed there was a difference in regard to the tension in the body when my walk is at different points of my destination (e.g. my core feels tighter before I arrive at a destination). I concluded that this was a "home stretch" muscle reflex, as I am so close to where I wanted to get to. I also noticed a significant amount of lethargy when I do eventually arrive at a destination, as it's the body's way of getting myself to relax.

Over the course of these sessions, we went on individual walks and fed back what went on in regard to what we felt physically on these walks. The first walk regarded an incident with my new boots which were rubbing and causing pain. This changed my course of my walk, as I had to walk back to my house in Salford (where I did this particular walk, though my final piece was in my home town Warrington) to change my shoes. We were also tasked with noticing different things on our walks. Something that stood out to me was when I noticed graffiti on the walls. It was noticing this that made me think about the kind of environment where I wanted to set my walk.

On another occasion, we experimented with concepts "Point, Line and Angle" and how they could be transferred into our piece. For me, this concept reminded me of Bogart & Landau's Viewpoints regarding how the same movements could be used in space. However, we adapted these movements to the environment and looked at how they worked in relation to the outdoors (near where we set our individual pieces).



*3 - Me parallel to the wall*



*4 - Me against the wall*



*5 - My foot up against a tree as the rain fell on the pond*

Exploring these gave the group, and myself, ideas as to where and how we were going to do the pieces we wanted to devise. We began exploring the personal meanings behind our walk and what they represent; ultimately what we wanted to convey to the audience within these walks. We knew that a piece solely about walking and nothing else may not hold an audience's interest for a long period of time. So, in process, we personalised our individual pieces to fit what our own ideas were going to be.

We were also tasked with recording walks in order to get a feel of what it would be like to explore all of these from a certain point of view.



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*6 - Raw footage of the location of my walk*

Recording this was interesting. I gave me a feel of the path I wanted to set my walk, but also how I wanted to present it. When I eventually recorded my walk, it was cold and frosty which gave the atmosphere a bit of an edge when I eventually came up with my ideas for the piece.

## My Ideas

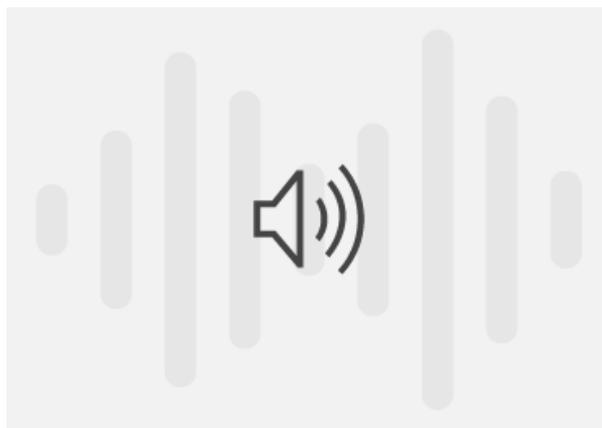


*7 - Me presenting the ideas for my piece in class*

We presented our ideas to the class individually. And each person had their own unique way of getting their point across in their piece.

The ideas regarding my piece changed over time. However I had settled on my concept. My piece was going to be about me and my struggle being both LGBTQ and also being on the Autistic Spectrum. The last thing I wanted my piece to convey however was a pity piece about who I am. So my piece was going to list these qualities in a way that best suit it and ultimately empower it by stating that it is that that makes me strong.

I went through a few ideas on how I wanted to showcase this. As they were going to be pieces to be broadcasted online, it gave us all more scope as to how to shoot and edit these pieces. Though recorded as films, we wanted them to be as theatrical as we could make them. My initial idea involved writing a song for my piece, detailing the walk's intentions in both its lyrics and its music.



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*8 - The music I had composed for the piece in its initial stages*

For the music idea, I was initially inspired by Stephen Sondheim when writing it as I played around with the tempo and rhythm of the piece. Also, when I was coming up with lyrics I wanted them to not necessarily fit with the music rhythmically as I wanted a bit more of a jazz feel in the sound.

However, I ended up scrapping the idea to use an original song entirely as I felt like it didn't fit with the concept I was going with.

I wrote a poem for my piece, which I ended up keeping for the final piece. It's worded as the following:

### Poem:

"It wasn't easy being me  
Life only dealt me one card  
It looks as though I am free  
But living with this can be hard  
A sinful crush was all it took  
For me to think 'What's wrong?'  
I saw his face and was hypnotised  
As I would if I heard a song.  
Why do I feel the way I do?  
A curse? A spell? Or a hex?  
All I know is I don't feel  
Like this with the opposite sex  
I was in an argument online  
This bigot called me a fag  
She didn't know that to me it means cigarette  
So I said 'Shut up you old hag!  
Your narrow ways will not deter  
The feelings I have inside.  
I am who I am and I have no shame  
So I shall never hide.  
It's not your business what I do  
Nor who I do it with.  
How many men have you had in life?  
You look like you're on your fifth.  
Don't come for at me, coz you're not me  
It doesn't pay to be kind.

You don't pay any of my bills  
So I won't pay you no mind.'  
I love myself and that took strength  
To accept who I really am.  
If you don't like me, regardless of thought  
I really don't give a damn.  
It wasn't easy being me  
Life also dealt me this card  
Though the last verse may spark some glee  
You may find this one hard  
I see the world through rose tint lenses,  
Purple, yellow and red.  
I think of quotes that don't make sense  
'I'm living for the dead.'  
People like me are generalised  
We're only seen as one thing.  
In films, we see us smart or weird  
Do you realise how it can sting?  
You don't see what's wrong with me  
You merely just assume  
He's weird or loud or both to you  
And still the standard's loom  
Being normal isn't fun  
You'll never understand  
The complexity of my condition  
It's like a rubber band:  
Elastic and stretches and yet  
Will snap if pulled by hand.  
Parts of stereotype is true  
And that I won't deny  
My knowledge can be supremely vast

Yet my humour intensely dry  
You see me every day perplexed  
At how I know so much  
About useless and unordinary facts  
That no one else would touch  
I understand that you don't know  
As I appear physically sound  
But my mind is somewhere in the clouds  
Whilst my body's on the ground  
Accept the balance. This is the way  
That I must live from now.  
Just be mindful of how you address me  
Your words can sting, like 'Ow!'  
I fight for everything I have  
And what I want and need  
There's no such thing as avarice  
But there's such thing as greed  
When you acknowledge me  
And think that I'm somehow wrong  
To be myself. I say this to you:  
I am me. And that makes me strong."

I felt like this poem I wrote better illustrated the intentions of my walk than using a song that I felt didn't fit. However, I still wanted to use some form of music to enhance the purpose of the piece. I listened to a variety of music when I went out walking my dog, purely to attempt to find a song that worked. During this time, I found what I thought to be the perfect song to use:



9 - Weak by the band Skunk Anansie was the song I ended up using

The song itself details strength in weakness in its lyrical content. However, in the piece you only really hear the word "Weak" prominently in the chorus. An audience member wouldn't necessarily think about the purpose of the song. They would more think of that word, pervasive as it is. And, as a result, it makes the impact of the poem coming after it more poignant I felt. As did certain people who eventually watched the piece.

Something else I added to my piece was karate. I've trained in karate since I was six years old, so the martial art means quite a lot to me. I had initially considered it with the song I was writing. However, I scrapped the karate in favour of the song. Once I ended up discarding the song, I went back to the karate. The intention behind this kata (kata means form in Japanese and constitutes a series of movements in karate) was to add elements of fighting and peace in the performance.



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*10 - The video of the kata I performed for my piece: Ananku*

The kata is called Ananku. Its meaning is "Peace of the South". Its origin stems from traditional Okinawan karate, but was later adapted by various karate styles. I was trained in Shukokai Karate, however in Shukokai the kata remains the same as it did in Okinawa.

I decided to record the kata in the rain, as it gives a more intense atmosphere for the piece. Having to do karate in the rain, on a wet field, was a bit of a dangerous choice as there were chances of slipping. However, because my piece represented strength and balance, I thought it portrayed an image showcasing this. Especially when paired with the music and the poem.

During the editing process, I edited clips of the kata in between shots of the walk. The intention was to showcase/symbolise a mental state of someone fighting oppression.

## My Production Role - Assistant Director



For the production, I offered and was ultimately voted by the group to be the assistant director of the performance. Initially, I was unsure about what my role entailed. However, it became clearer to me as I got more involved in the process.

As AD, I liaised with Carran and different members of the group. I became a middle man of sorts, feeding back concerns from the group and also feeding back responses from Carran. This kept the group linked with our director intact throughout and gave me the tools I needed to best assist members of the group regarding their individual performance and their production roles. I also was responsible for ensuring that all members of the group were present during sessions, and making any notes that needed making regarding absence. I met with members of the group outside of class to assist them in certain matters regarding the pieces and to discuss with them any ideas and concerns that they may have had.

I had frequent meetings with our director in order to ensure that the process was running smoothly from a technical and conceptual standpoint. This was crucial as it allowed me to better understand the ways in which the piece was beginning to take form. It was also helpful as I could give the group a head up on what to expect in each session, so they knew what they had to prepare.

As the process began to pick up in pace, I began to become involved with the technical side of our performance. We had ultimately decided that the piece was going to be broadcast over Zoom via a webinar function. I met with Carran and the technical staff and students responsible for our piece to discuss the logistics and also outline what we wanted to do with the functions. This became crucial, having to liaise with the assigned technicians to ensure that what we wanted to do was doable, simple and had very few issues regarding its broadcast. I was ultimately responsible for compiling all of the files of each sub-group and sending them off to be processed and edited for the broadcast. I was also required to be copied into certain email threads to other members of the group regarding their piece and reminding them separately if they hadn't seen the email.

I also became responsible for leading the Q&A at the end of our piece when it was eventually broadcasted. My intention was to ensure every member of the group had at least one question to answer. It was relatively spontaneous to begin addressing questions the audience were asking anyway, let alone moderating the proceedings. However, in spite of this, I think that the group did an excellent job of answering overall.

I did find the role challenging. And also adding my own personal needs on top of helping everyone else with theirs (performative, technical or otherwise) was a challenge to balance. However, towards the end of the process, I would remind myself of my own piece's meaning: Strength and Balance. It really helped myself destress and in turn better assist those who needed it most. Overall, I'm proud of what I had achieved in my role as Assistant Director. Though it was tough, challenging and relatively stressful at times, it became worth it once we showcased our final piece.

## The Performance



The performance went really well, all things considered. It was an interesting challenge to not only devise the project as a group but also work within the constraints of Covid-19 to deliver a fully realised performance. Though it was strange to do, I felt like it went better than initially anticipated. Upon talking to people I had invited to watch the show (family, friends and other peers), I was surprised to find that there were very few issues in terms of technology. Overall, people were pleasantly surprised as to how smoothly the performance went on the platform we used. Regarding the pieces themselves, people seemed infatuated by the different ideas each performer had for their piece. It was noted by someone close to me that:

"Showing the unique aspects of each performer and their creativity towards showcasing each idea and what they all represent made each performance intriguing to witness."

It's hard for me to consolidate my performance in regard to what I would improve on if I were to do it again. I think, in an ideal circumstance, I would've liked to have recorded the vocals for the song (or even perform them live) to give the music a slightly more personal touch. Some parts of my walk were deliberately improvised, so maybe I would like to have either played with that idea more or fully planned it out. However, I feel the balanced approach I took regarding the devising process helped immensely. Outside of the performance, I feel like I should've been slightly more prepared for the Q&A. However, all things considered, I think I did a decent job of hosting it.

Performing and being the Assistant Director of Just Walk has been an experience. I've enjoyed experimenting with this new medium and devising a performance through it, but I've also enjoyed being an important part of the technical and production side of the performance. It has given me perspective on what it's like to be on both sides of the production, onstage and off. With the way we had been set up to work with the materials and also the constraints of a pandemic, it was interesting to be part of something so innovative to the point where it does become inspiring. And as a result, I think that it has changed my approach to performance and what I perceive it to be.