

The Worker and the War Machine

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Abstract

This paper aims to discover the theatrical relationship between the working class and the factory of war. In that, it strives to prove that the lower income labourer is the cog of the machine: a nameless entity with an inescapable destiny. Through the paper and the subsequent production of *Oh, What A Lovely War!* I intend to give a voice to the worker and will struggle with my own blue collar identity, just as Joan Littlewood did in years past. This production and paper therefore is one of self-discovery and acceptance. In addition, it aims to prove that without the heroic efforts of the laboring class, there would be no war, as the cowardice of capitalism would fall without its soldiers.

Dedicated to Sam and Maureen Smith
My parents.

Your love is my motivator.
Thank you for helping me to believe in myself.
You are and will always be the best people I know.

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Chapter 1: Director's Challenges: The Bohemian meets Academia

Part 1: The Bohemian

I once was asked in an interview for the Stratford Festival, "What is your greatest weakness as a director? Please sum it up in one word." After a lengthy pause, I retorted, "I do not have a great weakness. I only have things to learn and that is a challenge. To view anything as a weakness inhibits growth." Needless to say, I did not get the job, but I was proud of my answer. This answer led me back to school to face the challenges that I have struggled with for a prolonged period of time.

I am now, once again being challenged to sum up my vision in one sentence: The Premise. The premise is that veritable clothesline on which to hang all of your ideas for your play. Although, I have formulated my ideas into a single phrase, my gut feeling leads me to write the following in response.

Below is a manifesto: a statement that goes beyond the premise. It is my soul's reaction to limitation, my own artistic revolution. I do this for Joan Littlewood and the pioneers of the Modern Theatre.

- 1) I will create theatre that is dangerous. Theatre that breaks down the wall between artist and audience. Theatre that changes the cell structure of all involved.
- 2) I will create community through my art. I will not alienate based on societal hierarchy and labeling. I will include all.

- 3) I will build on what I know. I will use my working class roots to provide a voice for the voiceless. I will therefore walk in the steps of Joan Littlewood and honour her memory with *Oh, What A Lovely War!*
- 4) I will not allow complacency from others or myself. I will seek honesty in the work and not just the aesthetic of pretty pictures.
- 5) I will accept that some things cannot be put neatly into words. There are things that move on the soul in a more profound way and therefore can only be physicalized.
- 6) I will stay true to my own self. I will lay my boundaries. I will create without fear.

Part Two: Academia

My goal in coming back to school was to challenge myself, to push my boundaries and learn anew. Essentially, I quest to win the game that I have been playing for years, which is best summed up in a quote from Khalil Gabrin, “And God said, “Love Your Enemy.” and I obeyed him and loved myself.”

To succeed I have to face my obstacles which are listed below:

This first challenge, which is both personal and artistic, lies in a deep-rooted insecurity. For as long as I can remember, I have relied on others to define who I am in the world and accepted it without question. This is my biggest obstacle. After spending much of the past three months travelling I have grown accustomed to my own company and my own sensibilities. I have found a strength that I have only possessed when I am outside my present circumstances. I have laid boundaries,

challenged the status quo with integrity and used the word “no”. This sense of self is best summed up in an Emily Bronte poem:

I'm happiest when most away
I can bear my soul from its home of clay
On a windy night when the moon is bright
And the eye can wander thru worlds of light
When I am not and none beside
Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky
But only spirit wandering wide
Thru infinite immensity. (Roper, pg. .216)

My goal now is to secure this vibrant and necessary energy that fuels my sense of self and shelter it on the home front. For too long, I have been the victim of people pleasing. I have allowed myself to be over-empathetic to the needs and feelings of others whilst negating my own. This essentially allows others to take control of the situation and render me voiceless. I am in the process of learning the difference between being kind and overly nice. The latter allows others to erase my wants as a person and as an artist.

The major part of this challenge is my inability to set boundaries and say “no”. I have already conceded to a request from an actor on this project for a day off. It is an arduous task, but I believe that if I can overcome this, I will thrive in my art as well as life. My strategy for facing this challenge is as follows:

- 1) Laying Boundaries: After a discussion with my Stage Manager it has been decided that there will be no electronics allowed in the room during

- rehearsal. There is also a no absentee/no late rule, except under extreme circumstance. This is the first step to setting up the room the way I want it be.
- 2) Saying No: I will allow myself a period of time to contemplate requests. I will handle each issue individually and with empathy without negating the needs of the ensemble, the team or myself.
 - 3) Self Care: I will put into practice the art of meditation as I find my mind directly affects my body. I need to slow down and breathe. As an obsessive worrier, this will help me realize the things I can control vs. the things I cannot.
 - 4) Short and Specific: With a tendency to over talk my ideas, I will again utilize active listening and breathing before trying to put something into words.

My mantra therefore for the year is a John Kabat-Zinn quote:

Maybe the fear is that we are less than we think we are

When the actuality of it is that we are much, much more. (goodreads.com)

My second challenge for this thesis year focuses on time management.

Known affectionately as “The Cowboy” to many of the York Faculty for my in the moment directorial style, it is now time to harness that spirit and organize ahead of time. I have relied heavily on my intuition and my connection with the actors in the room, rather than pre-planning what I would like to tackle on a daily basis in rehearsal. Given the nature of *Oh, What A Lovely War!* (the music, choreography and the insertion of a physical theatre aspect) paired with a very limited rehearsal period, my Cowboy demeanor needs to be wrangled. My intent regarding this challenge is two-fold:

Firstly, I will set a very tight and rigorous rehearsal schedule off the top, which I will share with my Stage Management team and ask for their assistance in sticking to it. This timeline will be included as part of my director's journal in the latter part of this paper.

Secondly, as my class load is very light this year (one class every other Tuesday), I will book studio time to carefully choreograph and design the physical aspects of the work. In this, I will also have to take into careful consideration the actors and their physical limitations. This studio time will be paramount to running rehearsals smoothly and effectively. I will also document this as part of my journal. The last challenge relates solely to the artistry itself. How can I use this piece to create a community between artist and audience? How can I engage the audience as part of the movement of the play? This idea will be flushed out in further chapters. However, I will state that this has always been at the forefront of my artistry and I am always searching for ways to deepen this connection.

Chapter 2: Introduction to Concept: The Fun Palace Factory

Premise: The Factory of War Enslaves the Worker

The Setting: The Fun Palace Factory

Time: Indistinct.

The question was: how do I utilize the sensibilities of Joan Littlewood and her fight for the working class, marry that with the line from *Oh, What A Lovely War!* that states, "We will now perform for you the ever-popular War Game" (Theatre Workshop, 3) whilst, placing my own contemporary edge to the piece? After many revisions and ideas, I decided to set the piece in a factory that uses its workers as the pawns of the repetitive cycle of war.

The Players

The musical, originally performed in 1963, used pierrots as players. In her autobiography, *Joan's Book*, Littlewood states, "They must all Pierrots. The war is a Pierrot Show...war is only for clowns." (pg. 675) The idea of satire was evident. It is my belief that Littlewood was not only examining the English Pierrots which reflected the spirit of the post war aftermath, but also was acknowledging the original Commedia Del' Arte Clown. As Jon Davison explains in his book *CLOWN*, "Pierrot was in one sense a French Derivative of the Italian Pedrolino, a minor mask...a simple and credulous peasant." (pg. 33) Pedrolino was also the character that would take on the traits and costuming of the other stock characters. He would try to inhabit their sensibilities, perhaps to be seen as something other than his peasantly form. In this action we find his discontent with his class.

This, in my belief, is why Littlewood suggested the Pierrot in the first place. She was concerned deeply with the worker's struggle in striving to overcome his predestined class. The Great War served as a catalyst for the ideal that the worker to could move up the class ladder or be dubbed a hero. However, these labourers negated the machine of war, which was based on Imperialism and Capitalism. Their ignorance for the moment was their bliss. However, these "wannabe" heroes were actually slaves of the nation. In the book, *The White Slaves of Britain*, Cobden defines slavery as,

" A system under which the time and toil of one person are compulsorily the property of another. The power of life and death, and the privilege of using the lash in the master, are not essential, but casual attendants of slavery, which comprehends all involuntary servitude without adequate recompense or the means to escape. (pg. 13)

To contemporize this, I look at the pierrots around me. They are still young men, workers fighting to find a better place despite being locked into their predestined class structure. I am reminded constantly of this as I watch the masses of Irish lads walk past my door each morning. Based on statistics from The IEC: International Experience Canada Program the number of Foreign Nationals has exploded in the past 5 years: 2500 in 2009 to 10700 in 2014. (irishcanadianimmigrationcentre.org) These workers have come to convert a church into high-end loft spaces that they will never be able to afford. Their work is a constant reminder of their place in society and the dominance of Capital. These are the men that interest me. I will discuss this matter in greater detail in Chapter 4.

I find it deeply ironic that the pierrot should also be a device of our artistic medium. I too relate to these working men. As an artist in this country, I find myself at the bottom of the food chain, striving to find my place. I too beg, borrow, steal and slave myself to government funding to become a hero.

Now I am left with more questions: Who are we, if we are not somebody to someone else? Do we always need the validation of others to feel fulfilled? What if our work, the blood and substance of whom we are, effects no change? It all leads to a state of humourous melancholy.

The actors in this production will represent these modern day pierrots. With hammer, drill, saw and chisel they will construct the playing space. They will all inhabit many roles like Predolino. In effect These Pierrots of the Factory of War will be building the weapons of their own destruction.

The MFA students have already been cast in several parts. They at first will be the pawns of the game: the toy commanders, the tin soldiers and plastic horses. I will be using several theatrical devices to express the inanimate nature of these characters off the top. They will be grotesque: unnatural. I will rely heavily on the idea of imposition for the characters of the upper class. Having said that, the workers will also have great empathy of their superiors. They intuitively will understand their position in the piece, and give their dominators a sympathetic edge. My goal, as always through my work, is to show the complexity of humanity. In this, even the people in power have to struggle to maintain their grasp.

In grave juxtaposition with the absurdity of the upper class, the actors will inhabit the soldiers with the rawness of the working class of South London. These

soldiers will be the men and women that Joan Littlewood was surrounded with in her infant stages. The men that wooed her mother and went to war to win her heart. The prime example being Jim, an asphalter, who as Littlewood explains in her autobiography:

Jim was by now well and truly smitten. What could he do? In the end....

Kate told him she thought he ought to do his bit. So as his brother was already over there....that's what he did.

He came to Stockwell, wearing his khaki, a round-faced, boyish-looking soldier. (pg 8)

These were the workers that went into the Great War ignorant of the grotesque machine that awaited them.

As I write this, my news panel flashes of the shooting of a soldier in Ottawa who was standing guard at the National War Memorial. I am left stunned and with the singular thought that it is always the labouring Pierrot who puts their life on the line for the capitalist factory of war. I am now infuriated.

One obstacle was seemingly ever present for me: What to do with the character of the MC? In my initial concept, which was to use child actors, this character would assume the role of mother, someone to nurture the actors as the play transpired. However, given the nature of the factory, I now envision her as a complex figurehead: The owner, manipulator of the piece. She embodies the role of politician and controller. This Factory must be dominated by her. I have decided, to remove her from the body of war. She must be placed atop scaffolding, manipulating the situation. When she lights a cigarette: smoke will fill the stage as if

in a gas attack. When she pours herself water: rain falls. Her simple and specific acts become horrifyingly real to others. The MC, as nation therefore, holds the strings to all of the puppets. In thus removing this actor from the stage and placing her high above, she also represents the cowardice of the ruling class, which Littlewood was so eager to illustrate. She will be the embodiment of the motherland that all are fighting for which in return has no regard for her people just the gain of property and capital.

The Process:

Having not directed a musical in a very long time, I find myself struggling at where to begin. So.... I return to what I know: Specificity of action.

I want my actors to have a back-story. I intrinsically want to know who they are in the world. For the Pierrots: Where did you come from? Why are you here? Do you have a family? What mouths have you to feed? What are you? Why do you sacrifice for money? Why? Why? Why? This is my starting point.

In my process, I rely heavily on the work of Uta Hagen and her 9 questions stated in her book *Respect for Acting*:

Who are you? Character.

What time is it? Century, Year, Season, Day, Minute.

Where am I? Country, City, Neighbourhood, House, Room, Area of the Room.

What surrounds you? Animate and inanimate objects.

What are the given circumstances? Past, present, future, and the events.

What is my relationship? Relation to total events, other characters, and to things.

What do I want? Character, main and immediate objectives.

What's in my way? Obstacles.

What do I do to get what I want? The action: physical, verbal. (pg. 82)

I will request that the actors do this homework as a major part of the process.

In terms of rehearsal, I will be working closely with the Musical Director Samuel Sholdice on how to get the right feel for this show. I attest, and he is in agreement, that the songs need to sound natural with no melodic underscoring from instruments. Therefore we have decided that the show will be done using only voice and percussion. My rationale behind this is due to the fact that these were for the most part trench songs obscured from the music halls and churches of the period. I want to keep the voice of the worker as unimpeded as possible. I do not wish there to be the imposition of instrumentation, rather just the purity and rawness of the worker's voice.

There is also going to be a heavy focus on movement. I am going to approach this from not only using the specificity of action of the characters, but also utilizing the Laban technique, which Littlewood also used in her work. This work focuses on Space, Weight, Time and Flow. The show will be heavily staged and choreographed, as it is a musical and I find that this technique will help us guide us through the episodic journey. I am keenly interested in finding different rhythms for the battle scenes, which are ever present: marching and dying are prolific throughout the piece. I am concerned with finding new ways to represent these actions, thus I turn to Laban. We will look at effort actions such as: Float, punch, glide, slash, dab, wring, flick and press to get different dynamics of movement.

In terms of choreography, I will aim to make this as uncomplicated as possible. This is not a musical that requires massive dance sequences; rather it leans towards movement to music. The fight direction will also be fairly simplistic with the focus on intent rather than actual action.

I intend to have a rough sketch of the play blocked by the second Saturday of rehearsal. Once I have moved all of the bodies into place, I can then go back and fill in with great detail the specificity as aforementioned. The plan is to have a first full run on Saturday December 6, 2014.

The Set

The goal is to create something dynamic and interactive for both actor and audience. The set must be flexible and all incorporating allowing the audience to become part of the action. The movement will happen in, around and behind the audience. The set must allow for surprise and magic: soldiers entering on conveyor belts, sandbags opening into troughs, cogs and wheels fuelling projections.

My inspiration for *Oh, What A Lovely War!* comes from the work of Scottish Director John Tiffany. Tiffany and I share a common theatrical sensibility. In an interview with the Guardian he states, "I want to make theatre as urgent as possible for as many people as possible..." (theguardian.com) His production of the Black Watch made an indelible impact on me. With this one production, done in the traverse, or alley setting he placed the audience in the trenches of Afghanistan. We were all soldiers. The experience was palpable. Soldiers appeared from pool tables, letters from home were written on the body and carcasses fell from the sky. It was dirty, raw and dangerous. I demand nothing less for *Oh, What A Lovely War!*

As I write this, the design has already been created. Having the audience on two sides there is a vast platform in the centre with trenches surrounding it. To the far left stands scaffolding, which will be the MC's office and to the far right two massive working wheels that will fuel the overhead projections. We have also incorporated two horizontal truss pulley systems that will carry several things from one side of the stage to the other.

Costumes

The Costumes will be fairly uniform for all of the workers: Jumpsuits with puttees and boots. When actors step outside of their working class into roles of aristocracy and generals the costume designer and myself have determined that these outfits must have a sense of the ridiculous about them: Kaiser Wilhelm's helmet will have a stuffed eagle with a limp left wing; A bull dog will adorn the top of Lord Kitchener's Hat; Metals and epaulets will be oversized. This will all add to the absurdity of the clown work mentioned above.

Music and Sound

As the work is a musical it would be negligent for me not to speak to it. In its initial and many subsequent productions, *Oh, What A Lovely War!* has either been performed with a piano or small orchestra in Music Hall fashion. Although I appreciate this satirical performativity, I believe that it dates the play. In fact, a review of the Soulepper Production states, "It's just a bit too lovely for its own good." (thestar.com)

The work now needs to find a new Music Hall, which will be provided by the sounds of a factory. Voices will be accompanied by the percussive soundscape of cogs, wheels, conveyer belts, lockers, and drills. It will be the rhythm of industry.

The only other instruments under consideration are bagpipes (or steam pipes) and perhaps some toy instruments like harmonicas and accordions.

A Musical Director will be utilized to teach the songs to the actors. In turn, the actors will teach the songs to the audience. I am not looking for a clean sound, rather a communal one.

Projections

After much consideration I have decided to utilize projections in the work. I have never been a fan of mixing mediums, but somehow the epic nature of the piece calls for it.

There are two parts to this part of the design. The first being the news panels that are contained in the script. The MC will type them out as they appear on the wall. An example of from the script is:

APRIL 22...BATTLE OF YPRES...GERMANS USE POISON GAS...BRITISH LOSS,
59, 275 MEN...MAY 9...AUBERS RIDGE...BRITISH LOSS 11,619 MEN IN 15
HOURS...LAST OF B.E.F... GAIN NIL. SEPT 25....LOOS...BRITISH LOSS 8,236
MEN IN 3 HOURS...GERMAN LOSS NIL. (pg. 40)

The other use of projections will be considered as a floor treatment. These videos will cover the main riser with images of mud, poppies, maps etc.

I have been in consultation with both my lighting and projection designers to work out the feasibility of this venture.

The Rationale Behind The Concept in Two Parts

Part 1: The Factory

The idea of the factory in co-relation to war is best summed up by Ewan MacColl, fierce communist and founding member of the Theatre Workshop who stated the following about a visit to his father's work:

An awesome, and exciting place. The glare of the open furnaces bathes everything in a fiery glow, the heaps of sand on the floor, the iron rails with the bogies on them and the giant ladles. And there is the noise, the scream of compressed air from the fettling room, the sustained roar of the furnaces, the clank of metal and the rattle of steel chains as the overhead gantry lowers its grab for a tub of newly molten metal. Then a hooter sounds. "Stand back there," says my father as he pushes me against a wall, "don't move!" And suddenly the air is filled with a swirling mass of yellow cloud. For a minute or two I am convinced that I am choking to death. As it begins to clear the moulders and their apprentices appear like devils struggling through the flames of hell. One of them pulls me to him and gives me a quick hug. His shirt smells scorched. It is my father, though he looks different here in the foundry. (Leach, 3)

With this quote the Factory of War becomes all too viable as a vision. This quote is the tangible premise on which I hang my ideas.

Part 2: The Game

From my very first read of *Oh, What A Lovely War!* I was struck with the amount of childhood games included in the script. Not only does it state that a war game will be played, but the idea of youthful sport is evident, “ We’ve watched you playing Cricket and every kind of game. At football, golf and polo, you men have made your name.” (Theatre Workshop 12-13) Further into the script we encounter men playing a game of football during the Christmas Truce of 1914, riding imaginary horses, utilizing umbrellas as guns and into Act 2 we discover the soldiers playing leapfrog. As audience, we are asked to expand our imaginations and come in ready to play. This sense of war as play or sport is summed up in the poem by Colwyn Phillips who uses horse racing as an analogy for the battlefield:

Racing Rhymes

Have you felt the joy that is almost fear
 As you face the ditch and are two lengths clear
 And you hear the thunder of hoofs in rear?
 There is a second when you may see
 Clear out what the consequences will be
 If you go to close or take off too far
 Comes a rending crash and a sickening jar,
 A futile arm that you raise to defend
 And the battering hoofs that bring the end.
 You are stride for stride, and you set your lip
 As you urge with your heel and raise your whip

And the moment he feels the whipcord sting
 He peals from the track with a glorious spring.
 You hear the crash as the stout birch sunders,
 And gain a length as your rival blunders. (Sadler and Serdiville, 16)

After further research, I too discovered that games were used as a training device. In *An Officer's Manual of the Western Front 1914-1918*, Chapter 8 is dedicated to Games for Use with Physical Training Tables and Training in Bombing, 1916. The following is an example:

Jumping The Bag.

Formation: The players stand in a circle at close intervals and facing inward.

Apparatus: A light rope 5 to 8 yards long, to one end of which is attached a small bag of canvas or leather filled with sand and weighing about 1 lb.

Method of Playing: The Instructor stands in the centre of the ring and swings the bag round, gradually paying out the rope until it becomes necessary for the players to jump to avoid it. The direction in which the bag is swung should be varied. The rate of swinging as well as height of the bag from the ground should be gradually increased. The object of the players, of course, to avoid being caught by the rope or bag and brought to the ground.

(Army Printing and Stationary Service, 108)

This exercise closely resembles a rope game I used to play in primary school. Once again the idea of childish fun is evident.

In one of my earlier premises the idea of The Game was paramount. It toyed with the idea that as mammals we all play the game to win. In fact the earliest maps

for The Great War contained the representation of nations as mammals. A German poster depicts The British as Bulldogs, The Russians as Bears, The French as Cats and the Serbians as Pigs. (Cornish, 25) Whilst another map entitled, "*Hark, Hark! The Dogs do Bark!*" showcases the European Nations as canines: French Cock, German Daschund, etc. (Chasseaud, 21).

Our animalistic nature to claim victory was also used in propaganda and poetry. In Norman Alfred William Lindsay's, *The Question Mark*, Kaiser Wilhelm is depicted as an enormous ape with his bloodied Claws holding a globe. (IWM, 19) This image, paired with the following poem paints the leader of Germany as an almost inhuman entity: A thing that has morphed into the stuff of mythology.

Is there anyone I've forgot?

Kaiser Wilhelm said to his Chancellor one day,

I have got a new game to play

I am de best ruler in de world today

I vill send out ultimatum! Anon (Sadler & Serdville, 21)

Using the game as a launching point, a great part of the stage will be taken up at a certain point by a large map playing board akin to Axis and Allies¹. Mapping was an integral weapon during the First World War and to negate this in the game of war would border on the absurd. Further to this, many of the trench maps resemble sporting play strategies as detailed in *An Officer's Manual of the Western Front*

¹ Axis and Allies is a huge franchise of war strategy games created by Larry Harris. The phenomenon began with the first edition released in the early 1980's by Milton Bradley. (axisandallies.org)

pages 133-38. The co-relation of movement and objective is astounding. This brings the idea of game full circle.

In conclusion, I need to speak to the modernization of the piece and the reasoning behind the removal of the more “youthful” aspects of the original production (umbrellas as guns, canes as oars, etc.) Quite simply, the very definition of “youthful” has changed. We have moved from playing with dress-up boxes and skipping ropes to game consoles and iPads. Our definition of gaming has radically shifted. Our young are corrupted with their favorite pop stars martyrizing the likes of Jeffrey Dahmer and children’s television is dominated by violence. This production of *Oh, What A Lovely War!* needs to satirize in a more contemporary way.

Chapter 3: Two Working Class Lasses: My Affinity to Joan Littlewood

I have always been told, "Write what you know!" So here are the facts. As I stood in front of Stratford Royal Theatre this past summer, my connection to Joan Littlewood magnified. Here I am, the child of a printer who barely made it through the eighth grade and a crossing guard/silk floral arranger from blue collar Oshawa amidst the community in which Littlewood, an illegitimate child of a housemaid created and shared. The feeling was overwhelming. As I stared at the theatre sign toting it as, "A People's Theatre", I thought: We the people can make art. We the people have voice. We the people are community. My working class roots shed their shame and became a vehicle.

These statements are my propulsion for the vision behind *Oh, What A Lovely War!* This production therefore is a salutation to my roots.

My Working Class History: Lass One

I was born in 1973 in Oshawa Ontario: the city that "motovates" Canada. My parents met at their cousins wedding and married a short time after. Their house at 1036 Olive Avenue, bought in 1962, a bungalow with gnomes in the garden is their palace. My father, as previously stated, is a printer. A tradesman. A worker.

My fondest memories of him focus on his ink stained hands. These hands would tuck me in, arm wrestle with me and hold me when I was having a bad dream. That black ink accompanied by the smell of toxins it produced became part of my childhood fabric. Much akin to the quote from MacColl in Chapter 2, I found the trips to my father's work an exhilarating carpet ride. I would take in the smell of ink, the clang of the press, the breeze of paper whizzing by and the sight of naked women

staring at me from the pressman's table. It was my pleasure garden. My take away tokens were my father's prideful job of the day and massive rolls of colourful paper on which to paint. From here, I knew that whatever I wanted to do in the future, it must be dirty and raw. I knew then that I was a builder and creator and must leave work each day, even in some small way, stained.

This life, my father forged out of nothing. He was the child of poverty. This poverty stemmed from my grandfather's selfish inability to realize that his gambling and alcohol habits should not usurp his children's needs. Below My father regales the tale of his eviction from his familial home:

I was about 7 or 8...I guess. My father ignored the notice on the door. I came home from school, or running naked in the woods to see all of our household belongings in the ditch. It was raining. The furniture was heaped and covered in mud. My father started cursing at the Landlord, who immediately chased him up the front stairs of the house and got him in a headlock. The squeeze was so hard, my father started to bleed from the ears. In my shock, I do not even remember the drive to the shelter. I was there for quite some time. I think I went to school about 25 times that year—so... I failed.

Despite this, my father was the only out of his brood that stood by his parents. He supported them on his journeyman's salary despite the fact that his siblings made double on the line at General Motors until he married my mother. Even after their union he would stop by every morning for a cup of tea with my Grandmother, giving her comfort through company. My father is the very warrior I

wish to explore in *Oh, What A Lovely War!* He is the worker who fought for his piece of land and his family. My Father is the hero of his people.

Although he is the hero, I have always struggled with his faith, both in humanity and in God. This is a man whom I adore and yet do not share his values. I ask myself constantly: How can I adore a God I have never seen? How can I think suburbia is utopia? How can I negate science for scripture? I am an ambitious, curious entity. How can I accept his rootedness, or my parent's shared faith in something that has no substantiated evidence, or the knowledge that they are where they are? How can I trust bliss in ignorance? My parents and my struggle are my link to the Theatre Workshop and Joan Littlewood.

Joan Littlewood: Lass Two

Littlewood was born in Brixton in October of 1914. Her mother, as aforementioned, was a house servant, and her father she never knew. She not only was a child of the working class, but also of the Great War: She was a Wartime Cockney. Her roots fueled her artistry. Upon her death, her obituary in the Guardian stated:

Joan Littlewood, who has died aged 87, devoted her prodigious life in the theatre to a faith she had kept since her Cockney youth. "I really do believe in the community," she said when old. "I really do believe in the genius in every person. And I've heard that greatness come out of them, that great thing which is in people. And that's not romanticism, d'you see?"

(theguardian.com)

Like Littlewood, I too believe in community. Like Littlewood, I believe in the genius of all. After all, what are we if we are not story? Everyone has a story. In this statement, my father's voice becomes more palpable. My struggle seems to diminish through empathy and fierce understanding. Although my questions remain, I am able to find faith in the shared experience.

Littlewood's narrative continues when she received a scholarship to RADA. She pursued acting for a brief period of time at the institution, which introduced her to the Laban techniques she would utilize throughout her directing career. However, she grew dissatisfied with the elitist theatrical process and decided to walk to Manchester (263 kilometres) to seek work in Radio. Little did she know that this would shift her life-long artistic journey.

Upon working at the BBC in Manchester, she was introduced to Ewan MacColl. The two hit it off immediately. They were communists, working class and seeking to produce art for the people. MacColl at the time was involved in the company Theatre of Action, and soon Littlewood found herself treading the boards in a production of *Newsboy* (a documentary style piece based on headlines and features in newspapers of the time). From here the two would become the driving force of the company whose manifesto states:

Politics, in its fullest sense, means the affairs of the people. In this sense the plays done will be political. (Melvin, 18)

Littlewood and MacColl would continue to push the political boundary. After the decline of Theatre in Action, they began Theatre Union, again with a mandate that leans towards their communist political leanings:

THE THEATRE must face up to the problems of its time; it cannot ignore the poverty and human suffering which increases every day. It cannot, with sincerity, close its eyes to the disasters of its time. (Melvin, 23)

In the lead up to the Second World War they created and produced *Last Edition*, which, despite its popularity was, “closed by the police, and Littlewood and MacColl were fined twenty pounds each and bound over for two years.” (Holdsworth, 11). Their theatre once more disbanded with the promise that they would resume in a time of peace.

In 1945, Theatre Workshop was born. The company had expanded to include: Gerry Raffles, Rosalie Williams and Howard Goorney. This new company, as MacColl recollects provided:

An atmosphere of continuous excitement and relish, which invested the meanest task with significance. The idea, the dream, the vision of a new kind of theatre, or rather of a theatre that saw itself as the heir to all the great theatres of the past, was so palpable that you felt you could use it as a hammer, a drill, a chisel, a knife with a blade for every occasion. I had dreamed of living and working like this ever since I had learned to articulate my desires. (Leach, 48)

The company fused into a family that worked, lived and played together. They in effect were their own community.

Over the next few years Littlewood was devoted to rejecting:

...the more familiar text driven approach of the English tradition in favour of an eclectic, textured, European aesthetic that drew on her earlier agit-prop work, alongside commedia dell'arte, burlesque and revue forms that combined drama and dance, verse and stylized movement, song and direct address, together with satire and emotive sequences. (Holdsworth, 13)

This pastiche style has heavily influenced my artistry as well. My former company produced several shows using this style of theatrics: blending together a selection of texts gathered from news articles, journal entries and quotes with movement and song. Through this process MacKenzieRo produced two of its largest successes: *The Rake's Progress: Do You Know Where Tom Rakewell Is?* and *Teacht I dTir: Voices for Ireland Park*.

Littlewood in an effort to break down the fourth wall abandoned the traditional proscenium for a more connected audience to artist vision. She stated that theatre should be, "three-dimensional, solid, real, something for the workers to get a hold of." (Leach, 40) I echo this resolve about the proscenium, as to me it has always provided the sensation of a grotesque peep show: a non-tactile voyeurism. I think it is safe to say that Littlewood and I believe that theatre should not be this cold or removed. Theatre should be a shared experience. It begs the questions of today's theatre: Why in a disconnected age do we need more alienation through video and tricks? Why the separation? Why can we not be a community?

As my mandate for MackenzieRo: The Irish Repertory Theatre Company of Canada stated:

We work with scripts that challenge artists and audiences with material that is provocative, intimate, and demanding. We believe that theatre should always be this brave. Our work is based in experiential theatre where the relationship of the audience to the work as is significant as the artists.

This is a testament to my on-going pursuit to have ink on my hands. To me, there is nothing braver or more satisfying.

After the inception of the Theatre Workshop, Littlewood and company having lived hand to mouth in Manchester and Glasgow from 1945-1953, voted to move their operations to Stratford in London's East End. The dilapidated Victorian Theatre that they acquired provided them with a permanent home base and an embryonic chapter for the company emerged. Theatre Royal, Stratford East officially opened in 1953 and the idea of "*A People's Theatre*," made its way to the nation's capitol.

During the next three years the company would produce many classics including the works of: Sean O'Casey, Ben Jonson, William Shakespeare and Bertolt Brecht. Then in 1956 the cogs of modern theatre were set in motion and altered the direction of the company forever.

On May 24, 1956 the Theatre Workshop premiered Brendan Behan's, *The Quare Fellow* in which Littlewood served as director and dramaturge. As stated in the book, *Joan Littlewood*, about this shift in direction:

Whereas Littlewood secured a reputation for fresh interpretations of classics, over the next five years she became renowned for working with

emerging theatre writers to create vibrant depictions of life on the fringes of society that captured the public's imagination. (Holdsworth, 25)

This legacy continues to this day. The Theatre Royal website states of its current Artistic Director Kerry Michael:

Kerry's goal...is to uphold the theatre's commitment to develop new work and to provide a platform for those voices underrepresented in the ever-changing communities of the East End of London. (www.stratfordeast.com)

This truly was the new dawn of "*A People's Theatre.*" Plays by the people and for the people. On this the company and Littlewood grew from strength to strength producing works such as: Shelagh Delaney's, *A Taste of Honey*, *Fings Ain't What The Used T'Be!* by Frank Norman and Lionel Bart and *The Hostage* by Brendan Behan. Riding on their success of the new works, Littlewood and company decided to generate their own work, which harkened back to her earlier days of agit-prop theatre² and the productions of *Newsboy* and *Last Edition*. The outcome became the company's largest accomplishment: *Oh, What A Lovely War!*

The idea of *Oh, What A Lovely War!* surprisingly did not come from Littlewood. Gerry Raffles, Littlewood's life-partner presented the conceit after hearing a radio broadcast by Charles Chilton entitled *A Long Long Trail*. The broadcast as described by Holdsworth was, "a history of the Western Front from an ordinary soldier's point of view, interspersed with popular songs from the First World War." (77) This was the launching point for Littlewood to fuse her past

² Agit-prop (agitational propaganda): is the term used to describe the style of short, topical and provocative sketches performed by the Workers' Theatre Movement. (Holdsworth, 7)

sensibilities with her current artistry. It is the last in a series of plays focusing on capitalism, the exploitation of the working class, and imperialism.

The ultimate irony behind the production was that it made money. This financial gain had many accusing Joan Littlewood and company of selling out. Upon transferring to the Wyndham's Theatre in London's West End, Ewan MacColl stated:

A show which deals with war and leaves the audience feeling nice and comfy, in a roseate glow of nostalgia, is not doing its job, it has failed. Theatre, when it is dealing with social issues, should hurt. They should send you out the theatre furious. (Leach, 144)

These remarks back-up MacColl's original decision not to join Littlewood in London when she moved in '53, as he was concerned that the company would lose their artistic ideals for money.

My questions to the above statement are: Should we not benefit from art? Should we not be able to feed ourselves on what we love to do? Is theatre not a business? As Stephen Sondheim wrote in the musical *Sunday in The Park with George* and a statement that I believe Joan Littlewood knew all too well, "The art of making art, is putting it together. Bit by bit." (Sondheim, 39)

Although many critics have condemned the company for their successes, one can argue that through their financial gains they were able to solidly secure the foundation for one of the leading theatre companies in the country. They were able to subsidize community initiatives and in essence become the Robin Hood to so many budding new playwrights.

Oh, What A Lovely War! Created an artistic hero of Joan Littlewood. It secured her place as one of the pioneers of the Modern British Theatre. In culmination of this chapter I am reminded that with the strength of my background, I too can create. For both Littlewood and myself, class is not an artistic arrester, but motivator.

Chapter 4: The Worker to Warrior: The Ultimate Weapon

As I stood staring at the ceramic poppies emblazoning the lawns of the Tower of London (an installation for the centenary by artist Paul Cummins), I wondered at the monstrous loss to communities and nations. I pondered on the association between the worker and the warrior: the local lads that thought they could shun their class and become something other... the hero.

Hero as defined in the Oxford Dictionary states:

1. A Person, typically a man, who is admired for their courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities: "A war hero"
2. The chief male character in a book, play, or film who is typically identified with good qualities, and with whom the reader is expected to sympathize.
3. (In mythology and folklore) a person of superhuman qualities and often semi-divine origin, in particular one whose exploits were the subject of ancient Greek myths. (oxforddictionaries.com)

Given these descriptions and the possibility of the hero outcome, what person would not want to achieve this status? Who among us would not want to cast away the monotony of their current existence and ascend to an almost God-Like State? Our intrinsic nature leads us back to winning the game to secure this stature. But is this hubris or delusion? As the commercials for the US Army states, "Be all you can be!" (nytimes.com) do I dare ask if that has a limit based on economic status? The boys marching to the front were blinded by the adventure of war and the possibility of greatness, but they would soon find out its inevitable effect.

As Sebastian Barry states at the beginning of his novel *Long, Long, Way*, “He was born in the dying days. It was the withering end of 1896.” (3) As Barry’s character Willie Dunne went off to war at the age of 18, so did millions of others: British, Irish, German, Turkish, etc. As Willie died for his land and freedom so too did approximately nine million more.

This toll of life presented itself on the home front where entire neighbourhoods were depleted of their young men. Encouraged by Lord Kitchener with pointed finger and eyes glaring from thousands of posters in the famous piece of propaganda designed by Alfred Leete (Doyle, 19): men flocked in droves to the tune that Britain needed them. The idea that they were called upon by their respective countries and God was too enticing to pass up. Even before the act of conscription and the knowledge of what faced them in the trenches men walked up to the recruiting office to go to War. The question is why? Other than being a hero, what was the gain for the worker to face their possible demise?

My Great Grandfather was one of these men. A gardener by trade, he was offered a more comfortable salary with the Cameron Highlanders as their official bagpiper. In 1914 he was deployed to the Western Front. In 1918, he was one of the few to return. Until his death in 1977 he was consistently institutionalized with PTSD. So was bump in salary worth it? During the lead up to the war, many families suffered terrible financial strife. As quoted in the Imperial War Museums First World War Galleries Guide:

Industrial strife was common, as trade unions used their growing power to fight for better pay and conditions for their members. In 1912 alone, 40

million working days were lost to strikes. But not all workers were able to improve their lot—over a million farm labourers and an even greater number of domestic servants worked long hours for poor wages, beyond the aid of the industry-based union movement.... (Cornish, 16)

Cornish further states:

For many men joining the Army was a solution to dire financial need. The uncertain economic situation at the outbreak of war had led to many workers being laid off, and not only was a soldier paid, but his family received an allowance while he was on active service. (46)

The young recruits, much like my father, became their homestead's hero. This allure of financial gain for military service has not shifted. I have two friends who are married to US soldiers, both of which have substantial salaries, benefits and the possibility of future educational growth. In fact, the salary for a Canadian Private in their first year is approximately \$30,000 plus benefits. (cbc.ca) This amount is double the wage I have grossed for the past two years as an independent artist. Given this, and the added bonus of free education I can understand the attraction.

Further factors other than economic gain propelled men to go to war. There was a sense of adventure supported by the mirage of travelling to foreign lands, something most workers at the time would have never been able to afford. Others wanted to escape the tedium of their everyday existence such as the, "twenty-year-old Roman Catholic Irishman, John Lucy. He and his brother had joined the British Army before the war out of sheer boredom." (Winter, Baggert, 79) Other men were intrigued with the sense of community that the front would provide. This ideal was

monopolized upon by the likes of Lord Derby, as described in *The British Soldier of The First World War*:

The phenomenon is most closely associated with Lord Derby, who suggested the raising of battalions of men of the “commercial classes” in a letter published in the Liverpool press on 27th August 1914. The response would be dramatic; within a week sufficient men would be found for three battalions of “Liverpool Pals”, the fourth being added shortly thereafter. (Doyle, 22)

This sense of camaraderie or brotherhood is as profound now as it was then. The boys of war had their trenches and the workers down the street have their pub. They enjoy each other’s company. In his book *Iron John*, Robert Bly shares a quote from 1465 by the French knight, Jean de Brueil:

Battle is a joyous thing. We love each other so much in battle. If we see that our cause is just and our kinsmen fight boldly, tears come to our eyes. A sweet joy rises in our hearts, in the feeling of our honest loyalty to each other... (Bly, 155)

These men lived and died together as proven by The Kindermord described in the book, *The Great War*:

Over 35,000 German university and technical college students volunteered enthusiastically for the army. They received just eight weeks of training...Instead of being divided up and sent to different units, almost all of the volunteers went to make up the numbers in the hastily re-formed German Fourth Army....The losses sustained as the students...were launched against the Allied forces were more horrific than any experienced by the

Germans to date....The slaughter came to be known as Kindermord (The Massacre of The Innocents). (Willmott, 63)

The photograph that accompanies the text shows a fraternity of boys, waving hats and cheering their brothers on with the utmost joy.

In this brotherhood the worker and the warrior are the same. This sense of community draws me into the penultimate chapter of the paper.

Chapter 5: Staging Community: The Blurred Line Between Artist and Audience

As I stand each year at the cenotaph on November 11th, I contemplate the togetherness of the people in mourning. I innately am in communal thought with perfect strangers. The poppies, poems, taps and bagpipes are the glue that solidifies our relationship. This in essence is what theatre should be. But how, in a disconnected age of cellular technology can we clear ourselves of the clutter and just be in true relation to one another? How, when theatre has become full of tricks and visual bling-bling, can we produce something that will move each other into natural dialogue? How can we ask people to truly engage in the age of disengagement?

My initial concept of this production was to have it played as a video game: a young man, console in hand controlling the action. However, I was left with a displaced feeling and could only question the absent feeling of the audience in this scenario. I wanted something tangible, something that the audience could possibly control.

I return to the effects of the Great War and how the chaos and loss forged new community. As stated in, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*:

After 1914 there was as well a gathering together, as people related by blood or by experience tried to draw strength from each other during and after the war. The bonds thus formed were powerful and in many cases durable.

(Winter, 29)

I hereto am reminded of the role of women during the war. The women, who were left to not only run their homes, but the factories as well. The women who gained a

new independence and purpose based on the strength of their fellow women. Together they forged their own community, which strengthened their fight for the vote. The women of the munitions factories bring me back to Joan Littlewood.

For years, Littlewood tried to incorporate the surrounding community of Stratford into her efforts at the theatre. Her most ambitious idea was to create a Fun Palace that would resemble the bygone years of the Vauxhall Gardens. The Gardens are best described in the book, *The Tale of A City 1840-1870:Victorian London*:

The Vauxhall Gardens.... Opened as pleasure gardens in the 1840s, with a theatre, a banqueting hall, “delightful lavender bowers’, and an American bowling saloon.... Throughout the season it was open fifteen hours a day, and charged only a shilling. During the Daylight there were tableaux and pageants and balloon ascents, and as darkness fell, fireworks which lit up the sky for miles. (Picard 204)

Littlewood thrived on this idea of, as Holdsworth describes, “a laboratory of pleasure.” (33) However, Littlewood also understood that this was an opportunity to engage in the present technological achievements, thus also creating a “University for the streets.” (Holdsworth 33). What she wanted was to educate as well as to entertain the masses. This resolve for forward movement reminds me of the women mentioned earlier.

Unfortunately the Fun Palace did not come to fruition during Littlewood's life, however it is now part of Royal Stratford East's season. The teaser on the website states:

Choose what you want to do—or watch someone else doing it! Learn how to handle tools, paint, babies, machinery, or just listen to your favorite tune. Dance, talk or be lifted up to where you can see how other people make things work. Sit out over space with a drink and tune into what's happening elsewhere in the city. Try starting a riot or beginning a painting—or just lie back and stare at the sky. (stratfordeast.com)

This is what *Oh, What A Lovely War!* for me must become. I want the audience to aid the workers, sing along, and share the space with the artists. There is no voyeurism, no walls. This must be a shared visceral experience.

Chapter 6: Final Thoughts

As the machine of war keeps churning today in The Middle East, Ukraine, on the streets of America and on the corner of Jane and Finch it is only timely that a new version of this piece is mounted. The blood of the worker, the everyman lies in soil, water and on cement and steel. From here I have only questions on the state of humanity. As Ernst Toller once stated during the Great War, "We were all cogs in a great machine that sometimes rolled forward, nobody knew where, sometimes rolled backwards, nobody knew why." (Willmott, 322) This needs to be discussed. Theatre is that vehicle for conversation, and if I can add to that dialogue, I have done my job.

In the beginning I stated that I have always been encouraged to write what I know. I have stated what I have learned. I have stated what I know. All else at this point is inconclusive and awaiting discovery.

Chapter 7: Director's Journals

Pre Production: July/August 2014

I have spent my days in the middle of the Catskill Mountains researching the Great War. I have once again reread my favorite novel *Long Long Way* by Sebastian Barry among several historical books on the topic. I am in wonderment at my fascination with the age where innocence was lost. This compulsion made me book a ticket to London to further my research on the war and Joan Littlewood.

My days in London were inexplicable. Firstly, I was honoured to see the First World War exhibit at the Imperial War Museum. The curator captured the very essence of trench life and the monotony that many of us forget. There was a palpable silence from the masses as they sojourned through the artifacts. For me, it was like holding hands with my great grandfather; his pipes blazing as I walked through this mock no man's land. The uniforms, the signs, the propaganda, the shadows of soldiers on wall left an indelible impression. I knew at this moment that this was and always has been the production that I wanted to direct. My questions about war magnified. I knew that whatever ending was laid out on the page by Littlewood, I must reinforce the fact that war is continuous. This was reaffirmed when I entered the holocaust portion of the museum. The factory of war has not stopped—only grown stronger and more industrious. The greed of a few has amplified and the worker has become more of a warrior. I am left with challenges to solve.

The next part of the journey led me to the haunt of Joan Littlewood—Theatre Royal Stratford East. I walked through the streets of the area to get a feel of the

community—now mostly Jamaican immigrants. I wanted to breathe the same air as her—to let her inhabit my being. With pavement under foot, I strolled through merchants selling their wares, past the centre square with its monument to the dead and martyred, I watched children playing in front of the community centre, and then suddenly turning the corner, in front of me stood Theatre Royal. My eyes swelled and my body shook; I was here. For a moment her legacy moved in me and changed my cell structure entirely. I was seeing the possibility of what theatre could do. I could acknowledge that my inner worker has helped me to attain what I have today. I was transported and transfixed. I knelt on the ground and took in every bit of that building with the smell of diesel from the lorries inhabiting my senses. I could hear the utterings of two workers on break near by. I could feel hope, and in that hope a great resolve. For the first time I stood as a female director from a blue-collar background proudly.

With this stirring I entered the building. I stood in the foyer with the entrance to the theatre on the left beckoning to me. My feelings about who I am, where I come from and what I do magnified and tears fell inadvertently. I walked through the hallway with the mementos of Littlewood's life staring at me. I can only say that it was like coming home.

The technicians were doing a change over for the upcoming show and I was able to sneak a peak into the theatre itself. My hands trembling as I raised my camera. This is where it began. The power of this moment propelled me in ways I cannot describe.

At this point I knew I had to serve Littlewood—to honour her. I examined the parallels of our lives and determined to place *Oh What A Lovely War!* in a factory. The worker must have a voice. I was determined to pay homage to a woman who passionately believed in her roots. In this, it is my acceptance of something that I have struggled with my whole life. I have grappled with shame and ignorance of my people. This was my chance to create an ode to them. This was my opportunity to feel pride in my parentage and my ancestral line. This for me is my first step to finding true selflessness in my artistry.

In furthering my connection with Littlewood, I also knew that the audience must feel implicated in the work: I wish to forge a community. With this in mind, I have now decided to place the production in the traverse with action occurring in the audience areas. This must be a shared experience—not simply a voyeuristic one.

The goal is to have the audience in the trenches with the worker. This thought was solidified as I sat amongst the people of Stratford in the Theatre Bar. Littlewood's vision of bringing the community together had worked—it was inclusionary in its vast diversity. I was in awe as I sat for hours listening to the many dialects that filled the space around me. Little did she realize that everyday in this bar was a Fun Palace: people conversing, sharing stories and most importantly being a collective whole.

My last day in London was August 4, 2014—the 100th anniversary of Britain's entry into the Great War. I walked to the Tower of London to see the bold river of red poppies that occupied the walls and lawn of this vast castle, attended a special

mass at St. Paul's Cathedral and then entered Piccadilly to watch the screens turn from their normal advertisements into a beautiful homage to the victims of the First World War. As I stood in silent wonderment with the people around me, I knew that this was the only piece I needed to direct at this time.

Upon arriving home, I found out that my first production meeting was less than a week away. I gathered as much information as possible and went into the trenches blindly. I really did not know what was expected of me. I take the responsibility for this. I should have been more persistent in my questioning beforehand. However, despite my ignorance, I still shared my vision for the piece with great enthusiasm.

I am thrilled to be working with young designers who seem eager and flexible. They too are excited about this journey. We discussed in great detail the idea of the factory and the set elements that could be incorporated. We are contemplating wheels and cogs and a pulley system. Also, we are contemplating using the loading dock door as an entrance point. I quite like the idea of people being trapped in the factory with the worker. In terms of costuming, it has been decided that each actor will have a base worker uniform, with additional pieces to be hung around the set for easy access. I suggested that the nations might be represented by animals as per a propaganda map I found at the Imperial War Museum (Britain: Bull Dog, Germany: a gorilla or wounded eagle, etc.). In terms of projections: this one is difficult for me. I have never been a director who relies on the use of technology. My shows to date have been very low tech and reliant on the work of the actor. Projections, quite frankly, terrify me. However, we have

discussed having one of the cogs of the set fuel the news panels that appear throughout the script. It should also be mentioned that we might incorporate live footage to be projected on the floor, to replace the slides used in the original production. If it augments the work, rather than distract from the acting I will be amiable to this prospect. Perhaps it will be quite beautiful.... This is my effort to move forward into the 21st century. Let the battle commence.

November 11, 2014

First Read Through with full company of *Oh What A Lovely War!* The evening began with a visit from Peter McKinnon who asked if he could speak on behalf of the first years to the grads. The purpose of his text was to gently remind the cast that they are leaders and teachers of these embryonic artists. He urged them to be kind no matter what as these younger students look to them for future guidance and mentorship. After this we all introduced ourselves, as it was the first time the grad actors had the chance to meet the Devised Theatre Students in our piece and the designers and stage management. Kate Boychuk (SM) then shared the rules of the room—no electronics, timeliness etc. After Kate spoke, I gave a brief introduction on the concept. I suggested that by placing the production in a factory the work not only paid homage to my working class roots, but the ideals of Joan Littlewood herself. Alison Moira Kelly actually sent out an email previously that day with respect to the new biography on Littlewood, which everyone received. So, the concept was well received. I also shared with them the layout of the stage and how we were having the audience in an alley configuration.

Then we read. There are a few amendments to the script—especially in the second act. As our MD, Sam was not able to join us tonight—we read the songs as monologues. Some of which, I am going to leave in this form. The read was highly informative. There is a lot of work to do in terms of accents. Thankfully we have Sofia and Adam on hand. I am certain that they will start to understand the pace of the piece once we start to layer in intention and staging.

The actors were chatty and sometimes unfocused... but they do love to play. I will use this going forward. I have sent out a mass email thanking them for their work tonight.

As for my own practice: I still have to remember that I do not have all the answers and that that is ok. There were a couple of occasions this evening where I found myself impulsively trying to give a quick answer and then stopping myself. I will keep striving to be present and just listen. I will also allow myself the time to contemplate before answering. Moving forward!!!!

November 12, 2014

We started rehearsal tonight with a question period. After a day of letting the read through percolate I thought this was a viable venture to embark on. Many questions were asked that pertained to the factory concept. Why take it away from its original form etc.... My answers drew me back to my research. I explained that the pierrot by definition was a lower class stock character who was trying to rise the bourgeois ladder and that the working class soldier drew familiar parallels. I also reiterated Littlewood's communist leanings and her mandate of bringing the people's theatre back to the people.

Throughout the session there were questions raised that I could not answer. For the first time in my career I answered with a, "I am not sure," and allowed that to be enough until further notice.

After this we stepped away from the table. With a piece this size, I feel that the best thing to do is to get it on its feet and play. There is a great deal of material to cover before we depart on winter break so....

We successfully blocked the first six pages of the script: which include the March of the Gladiators. The challenge being that we do not have an audio system in the room so the music was difficult to decipher. The actors, despite not being able to hear the music, brought a great sense of play to the work. It was a very fulfilling night.

November 18, 2014: Company Meeting in the Recital Hall

What an honour to stand in front of everyone and share the vision for the piece. I feel so fortunate to have the support of Paul and Ines as well as my parents. In my introduction I stated that the working class went off to war to become a hero. It was the first time in their lives that they felt as if they were giants. I shared that feeling tonight. I, for the first time in a long time, felt an immense pride. I felt tall and brave. I overcame my stage fright that usually haunts me and I spoke my truth. It was an incredible moment. I have included the speech as part of this journal as these are the words that remind me daily why I do what I do.

The designers were wonderful. They held the audience in an awed silence. The machine is now fully in motion.

It was decided that we would only do a read through of Act 1, which is what we did. The actors were fully engaged trying out their accents that are still in progress. I was immensely pleased. The room was shaking with excited energy. As stated earlier, this is a copy of the speech I prepared for the evening:

As I stand amongst the rubble of my own not so distant wars shackled with memories and eyes blinking in the haze of what has happened, the effects of trauma written in my veins... I reflect on my great grandfather.

I remember him only as a child of 5, sitting in his corner of the nursing home staring out the window, with his tartan blanket covering him, seeking his final peace. His melancholy even then was palpable.

My pa went off to the Great War in 1914 as a bagpiper for the Royal Cameron Highlanders. He came back in 1918 in body—but his spirit was forever altered. He, like so many young men of the time sought a new purpose. Bored with the monotony of his everyday life as a gardener, he believed that he could come home a hero. These men are the pierrots of their time. Pierrots are not fools but avatars of the people, struggling, to secure a place in the bourgeois world.

Millions upon millions of men—went to war with the distinct idea that they could become something other than what they were born into: enthralled by distant lands and the send off they would receive. For the first time in their lives they felt that they were giants. The call of King and Country beckoned to them as a personal invitation. This was the first opportunity they had to be truly recognized.

Little did they realize that these labourers were merely swapping one factory job for another: the latter factory, however, they could never retire from. This factory of war would hold them until their demise.

My great grandfather came home with severe PTSD. Haunted by sounds and visions he was institutionalized and given electric shock therapy. He was diagnosed as schizophrenic, at a time when we did not know the effects that Trauma could do to the human spirit. Hence My Great Grandfather was forever in the grips of the factory of war.

This leaves me in a state of questioning. War, its effects and the people it holds in its vice.

The First World War was to be the war to end all wars. It was supposed to last a few months and then the world was to find peace. However, much like the industrial revolution that came before it, the war gained momentum over time. Once the machine was in motion, there was no stopping it. It became like a child's game of one up manship. This Great War became a catalyst for every war fought since. It introduced modern warfare: trenches, machine guns, tanks, planes and chemical weaponry. 1914-1918 was the age where Innocence Died. We knew more, we built more, and today we keep perpetuating the pattern.

The Great War like all wars was based on the greed of a few and fought by the many. The many being of the working class. We wage wars on the back of the labourers. War therefore is a perpetuated violence against a specific class of people.

I stand here today as an academic struggling to find my place in the bourgeois society. I am a pierrot, just as my great grandfather was before me. I too want to be the hero of my family. My family of fierce and loyal providers with their grade 8 education and stained hands. I want the piece of paper to become something other than what I was born into. This act leaves me with great shame and wonderment.

I ask myself daily—who am I that I cannot be content being of the working class from whence I came?

As I sat with my father a few months ago he asked me, “ Why does that piece of paper entitle you to more? More money, more recognition? Why does a man behind a desk, pushing paper make more than the man who prints it? Why do my dirty hands not have the same rights as the clean ones? Autumn, I do not understand. Am I not as valuable?” I stared in awe with no answer. My father’s personal communist manifesto moved in me and now drives this production. In reflection I should have answered:

Pop, my paper means nothing. If only I could be as wise, as brave, as strong and as grounded as you...you are the best man I know and my paper now feels like an inadequacy.... A fraud.

Oh What a Lovely War! is for my family. Setting it in a factory I pay homage to them as well to the revolutionary communist Joan Littlewood who created the piece. Littlewood created theatre for the everyman. She believed that it should not be elitist. She brought the people’s stories back to the people. She took her tales to the

street, the factory and the union hall. She was ferociously loyal to her Working class roots. She is my inspiration.

This production will give the worker a voice. It will kick bourgeois ass. It is my rage against the machine.

This play is for my friends who have recently joined the armed forces. Who decided that they should be All that the can be in the army and who put their lives on the line in Afghanistan. This is for the ones who have no other alternative. The poor who want to escape their proclaimed destiny. This is for my brother who lays bricks and cuts wire and who comes home to my nephew at 9pm every night just so he can provide.

The Factory of War is indeed enticing—with a grade ten education the military provides a minimum 30 grand a year, full benefits, free housing and the possibility of free education. The soldiers of the working class.

In a recent article in The Guardian a man sharing my father's name, Harry Leslie Smith stated:

Over the last 10 years the sepia tone of November has become blood-soaked with paper poppies festooning the lapels of our politicians, newsreaders and business leaders. The most fortunate in our society have turned the solemnity of remembrance for fallen soldiers in ancient wars into a justification for our most recent armed conflicts. We must remember that the historical past of this country is not like an episode of Downton Abbey where the rich are portrayed as thoughtful, benevolent masters to poor folk who need the guiding hand of the ruling classes to live a proper life.

I can tell you it didn't happen that way because I was born nine years after the First World War began. I can attest that life for most people was spent in abject poverty where one laboured under brutal working conditions for little pay and lived in houses not fit to kennel a dog today. We must remember that the war was fought by the working classes who comprised 80% of Britain's population in 1913.

For many of you 1914 probably seems like a long time ago but I'll be 91 next year, so it feels recent. Today, we have allowed monolithic corporate institutions to set our national agenda. We have allowed vitriol to replace earnest debate and we have somehow deluded ourselves into thinking that wealth is wisdom

Next year, I won't wear the poppy but I will until my last breath remember the past and the struggles my generation made to build this country into a civilized state for the working and middle classes. If we are to survive as a progressive nation we have to start tending to our living because the wounded: our poor, our underemployed youth, our hard-pressed middle class and our struggling seniors shouldn't be left to die on the battleground of modern life. (www.guardian.co.uk)

With this I ask myself in conclusion: What is it that arrests me from fulfilling my proclaimed working class fate?

As I hold hands with Littlewood I say It is my art. It is my voice to rise up against the atrocities that says NO MORE! No more guns in hand only knowledge that I have a duty to pass on through what I do. I can and will be the voice of my people. My good people. And right now—in my own communist manifesto: I say strike out against the machine. Advocate for peace. Educate the masses. Aid all in being all that they can be—without the factory of war.

November 20, 2014

Tonight we tackled the Return to Waterloo scene. The actors were fairly lethargic after a long day of classes. Their schedule is frustrating and I am trying to respect their boundaries as well as plowing through the first act. My grievance lies in the fact that the grads have classes at this point in the process. It is so hard to have them focus on their thesis work when they are being overloaded with homework. In future, perhaps the class load should be considered for this part of their journey.

After staging this scene we adjourned for the evening. They were highly appreciative. This also gave me the opportunity to check in on all of the crews before departing for the night. I try to check in on a regular basis. It is important for me to be present with respect to the technical teams. This part of the process excites me—to watch it all come together; to see the investment from the undergrads. As a teacher, I take an active interest in what my students are doing. I want them to always feel supported.

November 21, 2014

The day of the Christmas Truce. This scene is difficult for me, as it is, in my belief the most important event of the Great War. It was the only time we found peace and humanity amongst the brutality and chaos. My questions leading into this scene were: How can I show both sides in a compassionate light? How do I deal with the MC during this scene? What activities should we consider when bringing the two sides together (soccer, drinking, prayer)?

After doing some further research, I found that collectively the two sides buried their dead whilst saying Psalm 23. I therefore have decided to add it to the scene.

The text is attached here:

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:

he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul:

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil:

for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:

thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

I am strongly moved by this, especially considering the fact that both sides will engage in speaking it.

To further implicate the audience—the actors will be interspersed on the risers. This allows the audience to feel like they are in the trenches with the soldiers. The scene will award the audience to engage on a highly visceral level (chumming around with the actors and passing things back and forth). The meeting of the two sides will start with Curtis and Luke—the two men closest to the age of the typical soldier of the Great War. The others will follow. The MC will try to stop the truce, but will be interrupted by the Psalm aforementioned. This is a moment of specific and beautiful solidarity. I have struck the news panel that states: “Welcome 1915, A year that will bring Victory and Peace.” Instead I have given the line to Soo, as the chaplain to finish her sermon. She will be interrupted by the MC saying “Peace?” followed by an abrupt whistle. There is an added sound effect of distant explosions.

The scene ends with the soldiers leaving each other’s company and heading back to their respective trenches. They all sing Good Bye as they part... Curtis and Luke are left one stage as the final explosion rocks the set. They will die in each other’s arms.

As we head into interval the audience is asked to vacate the premises as the two boys lie there. I have decided that the audience must leave as quickly as possible and all must leave the theatre.

The ensemble was in high spirits tonight. I now have to find the time to work on the specificity of action in this scene—it is too crucial to be just merely played. That being said, it was a great beginning to the work.

November 29, 2014

A rough day.

Sam was back in the morning to run through all of the music. He is still being challenged by some of the actors about his process. He handles it beautifully however—much credit to him. I was able to use the time to debrief SM and AD's about plan of attack for the afternoon and visit the technical departments. Nothing more thrilling than seeing the theatre doors open and the set being moved in. A part of me, in retrospect, would have liked to help them with their work.

The afternoon was a train wreck. The actors were unruly and chatty. The lack of respect for the shared process was palpable. Then came a barrage of questions regarding the concept, which has been explained several times throughout the process. I wonder now if any of them had listened to my opening speech at the company meeting. I cannot help but think that the questions are merely there to provoke. They keep asking what the difference is between the worker and the soldier. My constant reply is, "None! They are the same! The Factory is the battleground.... The worker the soldier!" I am not sure how much clearer I can state this case. I was successfully able to stop the conversation. Unfortunately, I could feel my anger mounting; I knew that my only recourse was to call for break so I could collect myself and my thoughts without the fear of over talking.

I find sometimes the lack of empathy for each other and myself as well as the other members of the team very destructive to what we are trying to achieve. I have decided to inform faculty of the situation and ask for their guidance. I gathered my patience and re-entered the room.

Despite the disruption I was able to tackle a huge portion of the work and it looks like we will be finished staging by Wednesday at the very latest. This takes me ahead of schedule. I am thrilled at the efficiency at which we are working—chatter or not.

December 5, 2014

First run of entire show. Act one was in much better shape today. Act 2 is still in need of some work. I am concerned with the Drill Sargent, Pankhurst, Sister Suzie and Waltz scenes. These seem to be like dead weights right now and more consideration needs to go into making them simpler. After watching the run and receiving feedback from Bob, I have decided to cut the Ghillie scene and start Act 2 with the gas attack. This was an initial instinct but I had to at least try to make the scene work. I am contemplating taking the scene and doing it as an auction voice over that the audience hears as they reenter for Act 2....

The show is in good shape pre holiday. I am still however concerned that the work will go to the wayside for the holidays. I have to be more trustworthy I am afraid. The piece means so much to me and I am not sure if that sentiment is shared. I find sometimes a lack of commitment equaling a complacent attitude. Unfortunately this seems to be something that is rampant within our industry. I do not know what the answer is anymore. I care so much about what I do and wish

others shared that passion and enthusiasm. I try, sometimes effortlessly, to infuse all I work with in this passion—alas, sometimes it is in vain.

Holiday Period: December 11, 2014-January 6, 2015

I have spent a lot of my holiday time researching the end of the war. I am not satisfied with ending the play in 1917. After much reading I have altered the ending to reflect what happened during the 100 Days Offensive.

The following is the revised ending based on Littlewood's style and actual facts:

News panel: August 8, 1918

The beginning of the Hundred Days Offensive

MC: Alright all, the final push

French General: Pour le glorie de France

British General: For King and County

American General: For our friends across the sea

MC: whistles

Whistles again no one moves

Natalie: You send us off like lambs to slaughter!

All: Like lambs to slaughter!

MC: Is this a mutiny?

(The ensemble start to baa baa baa)

MC: whistles

MC: You do not mutiny you obey!

MC: blows steam whistle

MC: At arms!

the first line of the Marseilles is sung by the French General

the first line of God Save the King is sung by the British General

the first line of the Star Spangled Banner is sung by the American General

MC: Right lads, Over The Top!

MC: whistles

The ensemble starts to sing Jerusalem softly (bringing the music full circle)

The projection on stage shifts to soldiers traversing the muddy fields

Natalie (comes centre and states(from the poem Release by W.N. Hodgson)):

Death whining down from heaven,

Death roaring from the ground,

Death stinking in the nostril,

Death shrill in every sound,

Doubting we charged and conquered-

Hopeless we struck and stood;

Now when the fight is ended

We know that it was good.

We that have seen the strongest

Cry like a beaten child,

The sanest eyes unholy

The cleanest hands defiled,

We that have known the heart-blood

Less than the lees of wine,

We that have seen men broken,

We know man is divine.

American General: The Germans are retreating

French General: They are beyond the Hindenburg line

British General: We have pushed them out of France

Three flag barers come out each holding a different flag

Alison: France

Sadie: Union Jack

Tanya: America

They triumphantly wave the flag four times

MC: Whistles

News Panel: Nov. 9, 1918

Corey as The Kaiser enters with a sheet of paper and states the following:

I herewith renounce for all time claims to the throne of Prussia and to the German Imperial throne connected therewith.

At the same time I release all officials of the German Empire and of Prussia, as well as all officers, non-commissioned officers and men of the navy and of the Prussian army, as well as the troops of the federated states of Germany, from the oath of fidelity which they tendered to me as their Emperor, King and Commander-in-Chief.

I expect of them that until the re-establishment of order in the German Empire they shall render assistance to those in actual power in Germany, in protecting the German people from the threatening

dangers of anarchy, famine, and foreign rule.

Proclaimed under our own hand and with the imperial seal attached.

Kaiser removes his helmet and places it by a projection of the tomb of the unknown soldier.

News Panel: November 11, 1918

The ensemble starts to sing: We'll Never Tell Them

The following countries bring back their animal hats from the top of the war game and state the following statistics as they place their hats on the projected image of the tomb of the unknown soldier:

Corey: Germany 1,773,700, killed 4,216,058 wounded

Bob: France 1,300,000 killed, 4,200,000 wounded

Soo: Austria Hungary 1,200,000 killed, 3,600,000 wounded

Deann: Serbia 45,000 killed, 133,000 wounded

Natalie: Russia 1,700,000 killed, 4,900,000 wounded

Neil: Great Britain 908,000 killed, 2,000,000 wounded

The carcasses will adorn the tomb as the song ends. There is a moment of solidarity.

All turn to view the next newspanel.

News Panel: Total WW1 Casualties: 35 million

Neil: 1914-1918: The war to end all wars

pause

MC: laughs and then types

News Panel: 1939

MC: off and change (whistle)

Blackout

In addition to the ending, I wanted to bring back a portion of the Ghillie scene to get us into the gas attack. I originally had planned this to be a voice over, but then decided to ask Yvonne to do a live auction as soon as the doors were closed for Act 2.

The following is the text:

MC: Ladies and Gentleman

Welcome back to the wartime auction

So much has ensued over the past two years

The Battle of Ypres, Aubers Ridge and Loos

Plus we have introduced the Military Service Conscription Act.

Now after the accumulation of much capitol

we find ourselves back at it.

We have many treats in store for your perusal and purchase.

Now, before we begin I encourage you all to remember that War is the lifeblood of the nation. It advances scientific discovery and allows new springs of wealth to arise daily. So be generous in your bids.

Tonight on the dock:

Silent Deadly Death: the most important item currently in modern warfare

From Germany: Phosgene Gas—cylinders which are 1.4 metres long and highly portable in the trenches. They can go on a lad's back. He can still even carry his rifle.

Next Up: Chlorine Gas—A Favorite.

And lastly from our friends stateside: Shares in the Arsenal at Edgeworth Maryland. Leading chemists have developed sixty-three different poison gases with eight more in the works.

Ladies and Gentleman your bidding cards at the ready.

Let's Begin.

(She takes out a cigarette—lights it and the stage fills with smoke. The actors crawl through the audience with their gas masks on singing Gassed Last Night).

Upon more research I have decided also to change the show's opening song. Row, Row, Row set up Littlewood's version perfectly: it was chirpy and perfect for her conceit of the pierrots. However, the factory calls for something other. It needed something more visceral—a worker's entrance song. I turned my research to the industrial revolution and found that William Blake's Jerusalem was the perfect fit. Not only is the hymn now a second national anthem for Great Britain, but also Blake's lyrics revolt against the Machine.

The Lyrics are pasted below:

And did those feet in ancient time
 Walk upon England's mountain green?
 And was the holy Lamb of God
 On England's pleasant pastures seen?
 And did the countenance divine

Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark satanic mills?
Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

I have decided to march the workers into the Factory with this song. This inspiration comes from stills of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. Militarized and almost robotic, the workers are then viewed as a cog in the machine.

My guilt mounts as I make changes to the piece; However, I keep in mind Littlewood's methodology of creation. The original was based on improvisation and minutely changes. My guilt then turns to a salute for her process. Littlewood was all about collective creation and play. My changes therefore become an homage to her vision and directorial ways. Instead of envisioning her turning in her grave, I see her wanting to support the modifications and the concept of the worker. With this I gain confidence and sent of the revisions to the cast. I also share with them my excitement for the show and thank them for their hard work thus far. I am really working hard at trying to remain positive despite some of the hiccups we had pre

break. For now I am sticking with the motto: Be the change you wish to see in the world.

January 6, 2015: First day back after the holidays.

I went into this day highly optimistic and enthusiastic. Over the break I spent many hours working on bettering the script and the technical elements. I had two sessions with the design team to paper tech the show pre level set, finessed the ending and the beginning, and sent out several emails to the appropriate people regarding changes. Above and beyond this, I also emailed the entire team and thanked them for the work so far. By the end of this day however, I felt depleted and emotionally distressed.

The morning started off ok. We had a safety walk of the space and everyone seemed to be happy to be back. Before we started on deck, I told everyone how nice it was to see them and how thrilled I was to be working with them in these final weeks. We proceeded to go through the changes on paper (which I had made a hard copy for everyone that morning). I reiterated that these changes were to make the show stronger. Little questions were asked at this time.

When we finally got onto our feet, the trouble began. Many times when I gave direction there was chatter in the room. The outcome being that the actors did not hear the direction given and we had to do the work again.

I decided to have a conversation to clear the air. I asked them for their focus over the next few weeks, while I would still respect their need to play. This seemed to help the process immensely. We actually ended rehearsal that evening in high spirits with everyone laughing and feeling supported and good about the work.

I do empathize that the time is drawing near and there is a lot at stake for many other than myself. I am really trying to honour where they are at even though I know this may lead to a final product that in my mind is far from finished. Trying to stay in process land.

January 17 and 18, 2015

I have combined these two journals for a reason. There was a technical malfunction that happened during our tech dress on the 17th that carried over into the 18th. The details are as such: during the Christmas Truce scene one of the snow buckets that was carried on the pulley system unlatched and plummeted to the stage. This bucket weighed approximately 2 pounds and dropped about 4 feet. The bucket missed a few of the actors by 3 feet and landed, thankfully, on the stage. The action of swinging the bucket was fierce and the latch on the pulley came unhinged.

I can honestly say that in my state of shock and seeing that all were ok, I encouraged them to keep going. This was the wrong call: neither the SM nor myself stopped the action, adrenaline kicked in and it was all I could say or do in the moment. Due to this incident and the way in which it was handled, a few of the actors shut down. One actor in particular offered an ultimatum of the pulley system or themselves. I was left with quite the conundrum.

I tried to assuage the actor's fear by stating first that I was sorry for not stopping the show. Secondly, I empathized with their position and said I would do whatever I could to rectify the safety of the system in place. I assured them that I would not use the pulleys for the rest of today's rehearsal and would speak with the

appropriate parties. I also, seeing that they were quite shaken, gave everyone an extended intermission break to breathe and calm down.

At dinner break I had a long conversation with the PSM's and the Faculty Supervisor. We discussed options and a solution was found. I felt jarred by the ultimatum given to me by the actor and seriously considered all of my options: including the possibility of losing an actor. After a long history of working in theatres where major mishaps have happened, I was reluctant to let the issue of one affect the many.

Myself, along with the daily faculty supervisor attempted to try to explain the given circumstances to the producer via a conference call. The situation was dire. After discussing the incident with many parties it seemed like I was on my own. I honestly did not feel like I had the support I needed. Luckily, a member of the Acting Faculty was in this evening to see the work—I was hopeful that he could help the actor see the complex issue at hand.

I will state now, for the record, that it was traumatizing. I have great empathy for the actor. However, after having run my own theatre company for years, I knew that there was also a vast majority of others that planned and produced this show.

We decided to have a meeting after the dress run with the actor—who claimed to be sequestered against their will and encouraged others to stay behind. I loathe admitting it, but the three actors that decided to stay for the meeting were all men. My back automatically went up. The faculty supervisor also happened to be a man that has worked closely with said actors. I felt outnumbered. I felt voiceless. It brought back painful remembrances of other times I have been in this situation. My

trauma kicked in. The result of this conversation became a version of myself which I had so conquered throughout the course of this process so far: the over talker! I had two extremely volatile actors in the room and I went into Fight or Flight. It is a regret. I tried to explain to them that this is not just a York University issue and that accidents happen all the time in the West End and Broadway. I cited Spiderman The Musical, Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas where people lost their lives due to technical malfunctions. I tried to explain the points of protocol, but of course, and I say this with empathy, this information fell on deaf ears. In the end, I did not show my best self. This is proof that I still have challenges to overcome. I do not view my behavior as defeat or weakness, rather as patterns that I wish to look at more closely.

To conclude the daily for the 17th, it was decided that the technical staff and faculty plus myself and the stage management team would come in on the Sunday at 9am to see how we could solve the problem. The actors in the room were amiable to seeing our progress. They would make a final decision based on what they saw. I left the theatre knowing, that no matter what, the next day would be crammed with difficult decisions and disappointments.

The morning of the 18th rolled in. Myself, Kate Boychuk and her two ASM's, the TD, PSM's and Faculty Supervisor Mike Kutini were all present to discuss the incident at 9am. The TD and Mike assured me that the accident was a fluke, but they would rig the buckets more securely with a rigging wire. Even if the bucket came unlatched, the wire would secure it to the pulley system. At 10am we were joined by the Devised Theatre Students for further training on the pulley system. We all

agreed that these students were undertrained based on the scheduling of tech time. They spent 1.5 hours working closely with the tech staff to perfect their movements. All who were present felt 100% sure of the new system and confident that the actors would too.

When the actors arrived at 2pm we held a company meeting for those involved in the use of the pulley system. The PM's spoke to the incident that happened with grace, empathy and dignity. One of the actors challenged them on the mistake and they handled it beautifully. The actor was persistent. I stepped in at this point and said, "We are all doing the best we can do. I encourage you all to remember that we are not only students in this facility but teachers as well. We must encourage mistakes to foster growth. The PSM's, TD and technical staff are working under tremendous strain to make you feel safe. I urge you all to listen to what they have to say with the acknowledgment that everyday of our lives is a learning experience."

I am proud of this moment. I lost my director hat and became the teacher I know myself to be. I placed the trust in the students who have worked tirelessly on this show. I know that no matter what the outcome, they all will have learned a valuable lesson in flexibility and compromise.

After the new system was shown to the actors, they decided to hold an anonymous vote on whether or not the system should be used. I was stunned and quite frankly outraged at this option. The technical crew not only admitted their fault in this mishap but also spent hours trying to rectify it. Plus, this left no recourse for me to deal directly with the actors that had issue with it. Once again, my hands were tied by the few with a direct effect on the many. After the vote it was

expressed that two of the actors did not feel safe proceeding if the pulley system was utilized.

The hard work of the young technicians was in vain. I am surprised at the selfishness and the hubris presented by the ensemble. I wish I could have done something, but I was silenced.

I adjourned the actors for the afternoon. I had to make amends with the people who designed and built the system. I needed to thank them for not only building this set piece, but for their tireless and selfless efforts in rectifying the issue.

I travelled to the carpentry shop where all were waiting. I spoke with tact and dignity. I thanked them for their hard work and shared with them my eternal gratitude. I also spoke to the lesson we could carry away from the incident and how it makes us better artists. Lastly, I thanked them all for being my teachers. These young people are great guides with their flexibility, honesty and integrity. I am honoured to have been able to work with each and every one of them.

The next item on the list was to speak with the designer. We went into the shop office for the conference call. Present were: Myself, PSM's, TD and Mike Kutini. This phone call broke me. I expressed my feelings towards the happenings of the day with diplomacy, but inside I was raging. It was unjust. The actors who consistently tell me of their professional exploits have acted in a most unprofessional manner. Not only that, they did so in a way that left us without options. For me, it resembles the hubris of the generals during the Great War who sat comfortably miles behind the fighting line—expecting others to do the work for

them. Even the Chair of The Department thought the decision was rash and unjust. In this I find solace.

I went into the evening rehearsal calm, yet guarded. The show went smoothly on first preview. My notes were specific and direct. I smiled and made eye contact which given the circumstances was difficult.

I admit here, that I felt let down. It must be acknowledged that I too am a student. I was unsupported and moreover demeaned for handling the process the way I did.

I am not without flaw... I did over-talk and openly express my feelings.... For these I will not apologize rather use them for further growth. But, I was left alone. This was not my job to handle this situation. Once again, I felt like my old self, having not only to direct the show but produce it as well.

January 19 and 20, 2015

I once again am combining these two dates as they both provided a time of celebration for me. I am proud that I was able to come in fresh and objectively without harbouring resentment for the incident that occurred previously.

January 19 was our second preview. In the warm-up I was able to include the Devised Theatre Students back into some scenes from which they were excluded for pulley use. This gave them a greater sense of purpose. I also, during this time, ran the opening and closing of the show to solidify its intent and specificity of action.

I was honoured to have my professor Ross Stuart and his wife Ann join us for this show. Ross and I have shared a love for the piece since our first class last year. We spent many hours talking about Littlewood and his production that he helmed

years ago. Having Ross and Ann present moved me deeply as they had just suffered a great loss in their life two weeks earlier. Their selfless act in their grief reminded me of why I love the theatre. What I do for a living allows people to escape, even for a moment. It also forges us together through a collective voice. I return to Littlewood's idea of community here. It also reminded me that the incident that happened over the weekend was nothing in comparison to what others handle on a daily basis. This was a very humbling thought indeed. I walk away with the hope that my students feel as supported in their work, as I did with Ross. That the encouragement will not only lead them to be better artists, but better human beings.

January 20th we opened. I came in early that night—kilted in remembrance of my great grandfather. I stood in front of cast and crew and thanked them all individually for their contribution to the show. No matter how hard it was to wage this battle I find myself ever grateful for all involved. I have grown. I then, without the slightest hesitation passed over the show ceremoniously to Kate Boychuk. I need to stress here that without her and her team and my two AD's I would not have been able to cope the way I did in the room. These young people are the epitome of professionalism and compromise. They are my mentors and I am honoured to have worked with them on this project.

The house was full. My parents who I devoted the work to, proudly supported me. I knew that no matter what transpired, I had done my best. There is always a fear in letting a work go. I have tried to explain it as releasing your child's hand on the first day of kindergarten. For the first time in my career I was able to

liberate without hesitation; I trusted my own process. This fills me with an inexplicable amazement.

The show was solid. The audience engaged. My work here feels complete.

January 24, 2015

We closed today. I watched in wonder as the piece, we have all challenged ourselves with, grew to a new level. My wish now is to watch it play out for another week. There is a comfort that is resonating within the actors that has not been present before. Beyond that comfort there is a synchronicity between the actors. They have become an ensemble. They are individuals working as a collective. The careful play has paid off.

As the Christmas Truce scene rolled on I felt a tremendous sadness. This was it. The work that I have wanted to do for years is at a close. I started to sob as I watched the two sides join. It was a reminder of where we all began two years ago and how far we have come. There will be naysayers to this, but it is a fact. I sit here with wise words in my ears that state, "Autumn, you are not always going to be loved for pushing the envelope." I may not be loved, but I found some self worth and love of self that was missing before this venture.

Post show, the designers, myself and our parents gathered to watch the pulley system in action. The look on Alexa's face as they moved across was palpably moving. We sang Silent Night as the snow descended, and those that bore witness were in awe. The crew then gathered in the space to strike the set.

Before that occurred however, the PSM's called me onstage. I was in a state of shock as they flew in on the pulley system the Super Crew Bucket from practicum.

I was under the impression that they wanted me to do a presentation to the best crew for the show. To my bewilderment they presented the bucket to me. They stated that I had been the only director to take such a vested interest in the production side of a show at York. They honoured me for my caring. This leaves me floored and with a sense of shame. How can we move forward in an educational environment without caring about every aspect? How can we encourage directors to value the multitude of talent and commitment that happens outside of the rehearsal room? For me, this is a give-in. I walk away with a strong sense of who I want to be in the world. I think of Joan Littlewood and am proud of the sense of community achieved during this production.

The Fun Palace Factory is now closed until further notice.

Chapter 8: Epilogue

Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind.

"Pooh!" he whispered.

"Yes, Piglet?"

"Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw. "I just wanted to be sure of you." (winnie-pooh.org)

This quote sums up my experience over the past year. With the understanding of myself as a perpetual piglet in the world, I have always sought the other to take my hand and guarantee my surety. This project asked me to hold my own hand: to secure my own self both as an artist and a person. In retrospect, I met this challenge and I am now transformed. I am proud of this metamorphosis.

It has always been a struggle for me to place my needs above those of others. I have always viewed putting my own wants at the forefront as a type of hubris. Over the past year, I have worked diligently on finding a balance. I have forged boundaries and collected a new sense of self-respect. I have toiled with the notion of artistry: banging my head thinking that my need to direct was also a selfish release of my pain. I suppose in a way I am right in this. *Oh What A Lovely War!* helped me deal with the shame of my working class roots. It led me to a place of not only acceptance, but also pride in my upbringing. I not only thank my parents for this, but the originator of the piece Joan Littlewood.

My experience with Littlewood truly began when I walked into the courtyard of the Theatre Royal. As I stood gazing at the marquee, I felt a sense of oneness with her. I was astonished at what she had achieved in her career. I felt her outrage at the capitalist regime and her in-yer-face attitude fueled me. This feeling was augmented by a conversation with my father weeks later when he stated, "Autumn, why does your piece of paper entitle you to more money, more respect? Why as a printer with ink-stained hands, who prints the paper, do I deserve any less than the man behind the desk pushing it? Am I not as valuable?"

His words and Joan Littlewood's communist manifesto drove me to a fevered passion. How could I validate Littlewood and my father with this production? How could I forgive myself for not following in the footsteps of those who came before me? How could I honour the worker and more importantly give them a voice?

These questions were answered through the vision of the Fun Palace Factory: the very cogs, wheels and pulleys representing the hardships and the inescapable destiny of the worker as part of the war machine. I wanted to portray a world where the worker was nameless, an entity working on behalf of, the apparent, greater good. The ignorance that led these workers into war with thoughts of becoming heroes fascinates me still. The factory that lures the naïve in with dreams of transforming their status haunts me. Actually, I will rephrase this: it enrages me. I felt a duty to honour the unknown soldier, the men and women without other options of escaping their predestined paths: the worker like my great grandfather who was held in war's vice until his dying day.

With this resolve I went into rehearsal. I armed myself with knowledge so I could conduct this beautifully orchestrated epic. I expected an artistic journey, but little did I realize that I would have a personal one as well. After a year of battling my own personal demons, I was passionately determined to redefine my creative voice. It dawned on me throughout the process, that my artistry was the one thing that had never abandoned me: it therefore was my guide and indemnity. I found myself to be more organized in terms of scheduling and allowing a greater sense of collaboration in the room. I was successfully able to let go of the notion that this was “my” work and hear the ideas of others. I gave room to process and play without the burden of presenting perfection. I accepted the learning curve and called myself a student: the result being a show that was brilliantly flawed.

Oh What A Lovely War! presents many challenges for a director; the epic nature alone is unyielding. On top of that you have to factor in the episodic nature of the work, the music, the contrast of clown and naturalism and the specificity that is demanded out of every scene. There is also the issue that the piece is somewhat dated. In my quest to reinvigorate the show, I recalled Littlewood’s process of creation. The goal was to create a new sensibility: one that was “in-yer-face” and claustrophobic. I wanted to find a way to bring this war into a new century and make it relevant whilst still respecting its past. I used Littlewood’s pastiche methodology when doing rewrites. I investigated the word of the warrior through poetry and historical fact through research. I also used the original text to reformulate scenes. My belief is that the work became more streamlined in its narrative construct. The former Ghillie scene, became a monologue at the top of Act

2; The Easter Uprising, which in Littlewood's production was merely a news panel, was infused with Yeats; Psalm 23 was inserted into the Christmas Truce to represent the historic collective that came together in 1914; and finally the ending was altered to illuminate the Final Push rather than the French Mutiny of 1917. I was loath to change what was written on the page originally, but I knew from a dramaturgical standpoint that there were holes that could be fixed or expounded upon. In my heart I know that I have the Joan Littlewood stamp of approval. I also know that she would not only honour the choice of the Factory setting, but respect it. The image of my great grandfather propelled me to share the consequences of those who cannot escape war. His PTSD left him forever in its vice. This production was an examination of the path of the worker who cannot escape his proclaimed destiny or class. With the final moment of the show revealing that the battle continues, it serves as a reminder of the driving force of greed and hubris of capitalism on the back of the labourer.

Although the changes were necessary, it left the actors very little time to inhabit them completely. Having had the opportunity to revisit works before, I am now determined to do that with *Oh What A Lovely War!*. For my own artistic journey, this is very much a piece in progress. I would like more time to engage in the specificity surrounding each scene and musical number. I found that, even after closing, some scenes had a generalized texture to them. I crave a European rehearsal period of an extended timeframe to allow the work to flourish. I would also wish for a continuous rehearsal period for consistency, as I found that the three-week break for the holidays was a set back. Upon returning, post holiday, it

seemed like we were in the same place as when we left and this was a trial. The work seemed to be put on the back burner, rather than the slow simmer of evolution. The last two weeks therefore became a frenzy forcing the actors to process more quickly.

Another hurdle was trying to schedule vocal coaching into the rehearsal schedule. The show calls on the actors to, not only take on several characters, but accents as well. I found that I was not able to utilize the coaches when they were in the room as I was consistently using all of the actors. It was fortunate that I did not have to use the services of a choreographer or fight director, as the schedule did not leave room. The actors were forced to work on accents in their own time, much to my regret. These were actors who were not only terrified of this process, but were also pushed to the limit in terms of their classwork. I hold a great deal of empathy for them. Not only are they students, but artists coming back into a process that enlightens and shifts the preconceived ideas learned in the professional realm. This takes great courage. I honour their attempts in trying to balance everything. They did their utmost with the limitations placed upon them however, if I were to remount the work, I would allow more time for the actors to engage in the dialect work, as in this production the accents served as the character, rather than the intention of action.

One of my major goals with this production was to create a community. A community of not only actors, but also one that was inclusive of the production team and the audience as well. In the course of sanctioning more time for the actors to engage in their own personal journey, I was able to award more space for my time

with designers and crew. It was a thrill to watch these emerging artists take flight. Their excitement fuelled my passion for the work. I am honoured to have been in such direct contact with them throughout the whole rehearsal process. In fact, I was stunned to hear that I was the first director to take such a vested interest in the technical side. These undergraduates were my mentors. They urged me to recognize my inner teacher and begged me to understand compromise and flexibility. I am in awe of each and every one of them. The challenges that faced us during our final tech dress depleted me and yet, these fresh young faces spurred me on with their grace and dignity. At a time when I was ready to throw in the towel on not only this show, but my career as well, they made me believe again. They showed me that true artistry is all about letting go. I am eternally grateful.

Joan Littlewood was a fervent believer in community. She was the creator of ensemble theatrical epics. My biggest concern heading into this project was how do I continue in her approach. Upon hearing that I was to work with the MFA class on this project I was, quite simply, terrified. This was a group of actors facing new challenges, both personal and professional, in an intense environment. Having worked with some of them previously, I was aware of their struggles and insecurities. They were disparate and diverse in their backgrounds and abilities. How was I going to aid them in becoming a collective that was passionate about a single cause? How was I going to inspire them to be a team? After much meditation I found the answer: listen and let play. For the first time in my career I utilized active listening: allowing time to respond and forgiving myself if I did not know an answer. With a tendency to over-talk, I kept my language direct and specific. I took

great pains to lay boundaries and say no, as well. This was a major challenge for me. I also allowed space for play and the free flow of collaborative ideas. These acts of empathy forced an immediate investment in the work on behalf of the actors. It also provided me with the freedom to share in the work rather than own it. This was a valuable lesson. That being said there were a few times this new strength in character abandoned me. On reflection, I am most indebted to these moments where I went into a reactionary place: a place where in my passion I reverted to over articulating my argument. It was proof that I had grown and that I could do better.

The final aspect involving community regards the audience. With the new vision, I knew that I wanted to implicate them in the work. I wanted to remove the idea of voyeurism: they needed to be a part of the factory itself. I stand firmly behind my decision to make the audience uncomfortable. I have always believed that theatre should be dangerous for artist and spectator alike. The works that have most moved me, have proven time and time again to take me out of my comfort zone. Above and beyond this, I was driven by Littlewood's passion for community. Theatre Royal Stratford East now caters to the people of that place. It has successfully fashioned a theatre by the people, for the people. This knowledge and the image of 'punters' having to physically shift to make way for actors spurred me forth. I was effectively able to have this idea realized. The audience, like the factory worker, was locked into the space, communed in the trenches, and were uprooted for hostilities. Upon returning to the show the day before closing, it dawned on me, that we had created oneness. The union of all entities was inspiring.

As a director, I am continually evolving. My work is always in progress and I am in a constant cycle of learning. Ultimately, what I have gained from this process is a belief in myself. I now realize, that I do not always have to be liked and moreover, I do not always have to be right. I have grown into a person that is independent and intelligent. I have a new confidence. As this piglet takes her own hand, she can now say, "I am sure of you."

Chapter Nine: Addendum

“Stop worrying where you’re going, move on. If you can know where you’re going, you’ve gone. Just keep moving on.” (<http://www.stlyrics.com>)

When asked to write an addendum on my process as a director, this quote was the first thing that came to mind. The rationale is two-fold. First, I have never really considered placing an explanation on my work, so this above phrase reminds me of the struggle I present in Chapter 1, where I pair my bohemian sensibilities with the requirements of academia. This recommendation for the realization of my MFA has sent me in a veritable tailspin. It requires me to label my art, which for the most part is based on intuition. How do I then itemize something so innate and personal? My answer, quite simply, is I keep moving on.

Secondly, this Sondheim quote is a summation of my process. Rarely, do I know before entering a rehearsal room what the final product should be. Of course, I understand the way I perceive the work and what my ultimate aims are, but my process is one that encompasses the views of many. In this way, I suppose I have evolved into more of a theatre creator than just a director. My time at York has allowed me to hone in on this quality more so than any other period in my career. The rehearsal room has become a playground.

With this newness in mind, I will now aim to describe my journey through the work: The director’s process. I will strive to show the differences to my theatrical recipe, between past productions and *Oh, What A Lovely War!* as the latter was a departure for me, both in scale and time.

Step One: Reading and Development of Concept

Normally, the first step is to read the play several times: at least ten. Each read has a different purpose. The first read, is for general overview, the second is to solidify facts, the third for character trajectory, the fourth to flush out time and place, the fifth to track movement, etc. Through all these reads, I have a keen sense of the sound of the play. The last five reads solidify this audio interpretation. This internal recording aids me with the intent of the playwright. Having worked previously on the contemporary Irish playwrights this work has been invaluable. It was absolutely crucial to honour every shift through punctuation or pause. This portion of the process changed drastically for *Oh, What A Lovely War!*

After several reads of the piece, I could see that there were issues with the flow of the episodes, just as Joan Littlewood saw with Brendan Behan's, *The Quare Fellowe*. The agit-prop nature of *Oh, What A Lovely War!* demanded revitalization. As I write this, I have an overwhelming feeling of hubris: who am I to change the iconoclastic musical of 1960's Britain? But once again, as Littlewood herself would do, I move on.

The reading of the works usually leads me to conceptualization. In the past, I have left the work alone. I have not felt the necessity to put an external idea onto the pieces I have directed. In fact, pre my tenure at York, my productions stayed as true to the original writing as possible. The variance in this part of the process for this production and others at the University has urged me to see myself as a creator in stark contrast to a director. This in my mind, brings me ever closer to the work of Littlewood. In a similar fashion, I have become unrelenting in my quest to put out

the best product I can. I am drawn now more fiercely to the unpolished, raw story: the one that needs editing and a dramaturgical hand. I applaud work that can change for the times, expressing its relevance for a new era. This is what drew me to *Oh, What A Lovely War!* As I am a work in progress, so too are the works I am engaged in. Nothing is ever finished for me.

With this in check, I consider my concept. This will now be a regular part of my process. I can now fully balance the notion that some shows will benefit from re-imagining and re-working where others will not. Faced with the somewhat outdated music hall experience of the original production of *Oh, What A Lovely War!*, I began to contemplate how to bring the powerful episodes of the piece into the 21st Century. I started to question the relevance of the long ago war and what draws me to this piece of history. The answer lay in my familial history. Always, when directing a piece, I try to find the personal link: the thing that is independent of all others. That one item will drive a production. For *Oh, What A Lovely War!*, that idea was my struggle with my working class roots. After many months of contemplation and re-reading the play, I decided that the show must be set in a factory. In retrospect, it seems fitting but also a tad obvious. This idea was already present and therefore did the one thing I loathe in theatre: slapped the audience in the face with the message. As I write this, I realize that to reinvent is invigorating, but embryonic ideas need time to nurture and grow. Perhaps, there is a way to blend the original with a concept that isn't overbearing. I suppose this part of my process is still in progress. In future, the allowance of time, perhaps even years, will be factored into the work.

Step Two: Research

With the script and concept in place, the next step is the research. I dive into books, films, articles about the time period and historical significance, as well as material on the playwright and theatre companies that have premiered the work. If a writer has a cannon of work, I also read that as I enjoy the idiosyncratic methodology of the individual voice. It is a gateway of sorts into the show I will be directing. The preparation differed for *Oh, What A Lovely War!*, in that Joan Littlewood was not a writer. I therefore, researched her as an artist and the company in which she founded, The Theatre Workshop. I also, augmented this by reading other plays that they produced, like *The Quare Fellow* and *Edward II*. It intrigues me to find the similarities of theme. Littlewood had a deep concern for the voiceless and her work therefore is their revolution.

Following the initial research as mentioned above, I possess an urgency to embody the feeling of the play and this leads me to location of the play itself. This portion of my research is a stalwart to my process as it is the fulfillment of my curiosity around place and how it affects the work. How can I direct any play without fully knowing the lay of the land: the smell, the feel of ground underfoot, the sights, the people? For *Oh, What A Lovely War!* my instincts led me to Stratford East and the home of the Theatre Workshop. The rationale behind this was quite simple: I needed to see where it began and trace Joan Littlewood's footsteps. The importance lay in her legacy and the community spirit, which defines her artistry. This was a crucial endeavor to bring me closer to her work and to solidify the concept of the factory.

Step Three: Pre-Rehearsal Preparation

After the accumulation of relatable facts, I embark on initial meetings with designers and stage management. With designers, I share the concept and discuss options for the technical elements. They then proceed with the information gleaned and start their preliminary drafts. In the past, this happens usually six months prior to the opening of the production. With *Oh, What A Lovely War!*, as with my own theatre company, MacKenzieRo, the design elements were solidified before rehearsals began.

The embryonic phase with Stage Management involves discussion about scheduling and guidelines for the rehearsal room. The goal is to create a precise plan for the upcoming weeks. In the past, I have been more flexible with time management, but given the limited hours available for *Oh, What A Lovely War!* I knew that there had to be a strict adherence to what was laid out. We devised a plan that had us finish staging the piece by December 4, 2014. This allowed us time to really dig into the individual scenes the first time through and additional time pre-holiday break to work through and run the show.

Step 4: Rehearsals

As stated above in Step 3, I enter the room with a plan on how to attack the show from a timing perspective. The first few days are blocked off for table work. This is the time when research is presented to the actors and the script is fleshed out. It is also a time for me to hear the play aloud and compare the audio version I have had in my head for the past few months to the actors reading of it. It is a time

of questioning character intention, which provides clues for how to move forwards with specific narratives. This part of the rehearsal period varies based on the size and scope of the play. When working on more intimate pieces in the past, I have spent up to a week on this part of the process however, with *Oh, What A Lovely War!*, this had to be condensed to two evenings.

There is a massive variance in process here from what I have done in the past to how I proceeded with this production. Normally after the table work, I set up the scene and allow actors to organically stage themselves. This allows them to embody through intention rather than the imposition of the director. As the conductor of the piece, I ask for specificity of thought and movement. I ask questions that propel the work, i.e.: What would happen if you used this line to aggravate them rather than soothe them?, or What would happen if you repeat the line you just heard from your scene partner, before answering? These methods permit the actor to find their own agency in the work; their own voice.

For *Oh, What A Lovely War!* this process needed to shift due to time constraints. I had to pre-stage the show on paper and then bring that to fruition with the ensemble in rehearsal. Unfortunately, this did not always allow the actors to fully embody their own journey through the work. For me, it felt like I had to solve a massive puzzle. Due to the episodic nature of the piece, it seemed more like the direction of traffic rather than the impulse of character. The essence of the final product therefore was aesthetically pleasing, but lacking the rawness and specificity I normally demand from my work. In future, I will use this knowledge when

handling an epic show and find another way to engage both processes. Once again, it is all about moving on.

Once the staging has been set, I start the work-throughs of the piece. This part of the process hones in on the specificity of action and simplifying the work so the story is as clear as possible. In the past, I have had at least three to four work throughs of a play before we enter the theatre for tech week, however, given the tight schedule for *Oh, What A Lovely War!*, we were only able to do two full work throughs pre entering the space. To further complicate this part of the process, there were dramaturgical elements that still were out of place, so these also had to be attended to in this time frame. With the work-through, I usually spend time watching the actors in process and take notes to discuss and explore at a later time. I find if the ensemble have the freedom of play and discovery many issues will be automatically illuminated. The answers to challenges in essence come from practice. The continuity of running a scene over and over with slight intermittent suggestions from the director to further layer the work with detail allows the actors ownership of the work. In a subsequent production at York, *Tales From Ovid*, this process was fully realized and the actors felt more secure in all aspects of their artistic journey. There was an openness that only time and continuity awarded. This work, also gave me the opportunity to go back to simplifying the work and honouring the original intent of the playwright. Unfortunately, this was not an option for *Oh, What A Lovely War!*, as we were not only on a tight schedule, but the actors and production team were also overworked in their studies. How can you then as a director, engage people who are desperately trying to multi-task, instead

of focusing on just the production? Trying to find the balance between empathy and artistic integrity was difficult. I had to constantly remind myself of the difference between the professional world and academia. I had to let go of expectations devised for a structured 6 day a week, 8 hour a day process.

Step Four: Tech/Dress Rehearsals

There is a childlike wonderment that comes over me during this part of the process, as it is a time when the active imaginations of many come together to create a synchronized community. I am always in awe at the technical team, as they possess gifts that I cannot personally begin to conceive of. Some directors I know detest tech week, finding it to be outside of their element and therefore an arduous task. For me, it is pure magic. I trust the people I work with implicitly, and hence become a voyeur and learner through their abilities.

Previous to this thesis project, my shows for the most part had possessed few technical elements due to budgetary restrictions. *Oh, What A Lovely War!* opened up a whole new world for me. For the first time, I utilized projections and multiple costume changes. It was the first time that I had a running crew of more than two people. It was epic in comparison to my other work. So, in terms of my process, I was outside of my comfort zone. Fortunately the team of young designers and technicians was astounding, and as I stated in my director journals, I am ever grateful for their dedication and dignity.

Taking the cue from the stage manager, we started the journey on deck with a full paper tech of the show. Two days were spent writing in every cue with all of

the designers present. This was also an excellent time to figure out any glitches that we could envision happening during our hours in the theatre. We then proceeded to lighting and sound level settings, running cue-to-cue and finally technical rehearsals with the actors. During this period, my main goal is to warrant actor and team safety, take notes on the reconfiguration of spacing, and ensure that the acting and technical aspects blend well together. I do a lot of watching from every angle. I try to keep my language simple and concise, as I do not want to exacerbate problems. This is a time of removal for me and of shifting the show completely into the hands of others.

The finale to this, of course, is opening night. I never give notes after this time, as my work, I feel, is completed. The show is its own entity and I move on.

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