

**EXETER
NORTHCOTT
THEATRE** HERITAGE

VERBATIM THEATRE RESOURCE

MODULE B: THE STORIES YOU TELL

STUDENT'S WORKBOOK

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MODULE B: STUDENT'S WORKBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Your school is a rich resource for verbatim testimony.

- Do you have teachers who have been at your school for a long time?
- Do you have teachers who were former students of your school?
- Do you have students who have gone on to do interesting things?
- Do you have teachers and students with interesting stories?
- Does your school have an interesting history or archive?

This section of the resource is designed for you to make your own piece of theatre based on verbatim techniques. In Module A we included 2 interviews based on a local Devon school and some supporting tasks. You may wish to use these tasks and interviews as a springboard to your devising process, and you'll be using the workbook to make your show based on your own school or college.

Some of the examples included in the workbook are based on the Module A school interviews.

We'd love to hear from you about your creative process - all the info for how to get in touch can be found at the end of this document.

Before you get started, we highly recommend that you watch the film of 'The Back End Of The Cow and Other Stories'. We make reference to this throughout the workbook, and in our videos.

You can find this and ALL THE OTHER RESOURCES MENTIONED IN THIS WORKBOOK by scanning the QR Code:



a) Aims / Objectives

What are you aiming for with your piece of theatre?

Remember, the aims of the NYC show were:

- *To make a piece of theatre based on the interviews we conducted*
- *To reflect these stories and voices*
- *To represent shows or styles of show from the Northcott's archive*

Yours will inevitably be different, but it's important that the whole group or company decides them together.

b) Logistics

The practicalities of putting together a piece of theatre.

- How big will your cast be? Will you need extra company members to support with tech? Will you need a director? Or someone to make a trailer / do the marketing? Will you film it?
- How long have you got to rehearse and what's the date of the performance(s)? What resources will you need to rehearse?

c) Verbatim Techniques

What approach will you take to the Verbatim process?

- Will you take your script word-for-word from the interviews you do?
- Will you select stories to portray in your own way?
- Could you do both?

d) Interviews

You need to decide fairly early on who you will be interviewing and what you'll interview about.

- Use the training & interviews section of this resource to help you prepare your own interviews.
- Think about who you will interview and why.
- Consider if / how you will transcribe the interviews, or how you'll share them as a company.

e) Setting for the Performance

Making sure you plan for your space is a huge part of the making process.

- Where will your show take place? Does your school / college have a theatre? Hall? Drama studio? Will it be a promenade performance around the site? If so, where will it tour?

Tip: If you're going to make a promenade piece, section 8 of this workbook will also help.

PRE-INTERVIEW WORKSHEET

Use this worksheet to help work out questions for your interviewees.

Interviewee Name:

Introduction to my interviewee:

Questions:

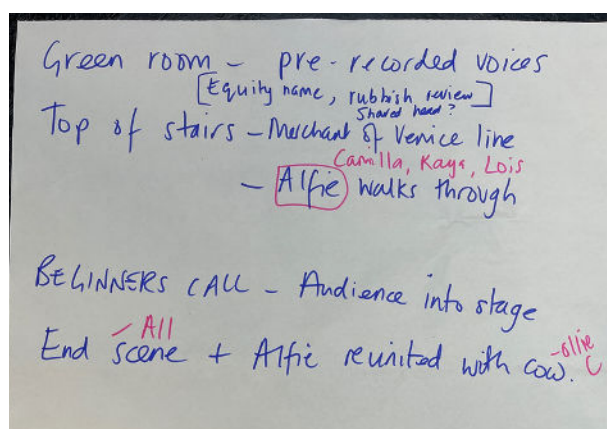
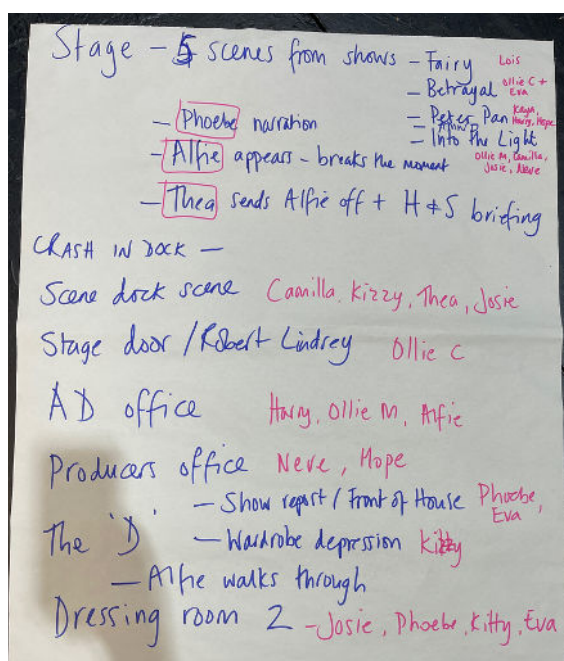
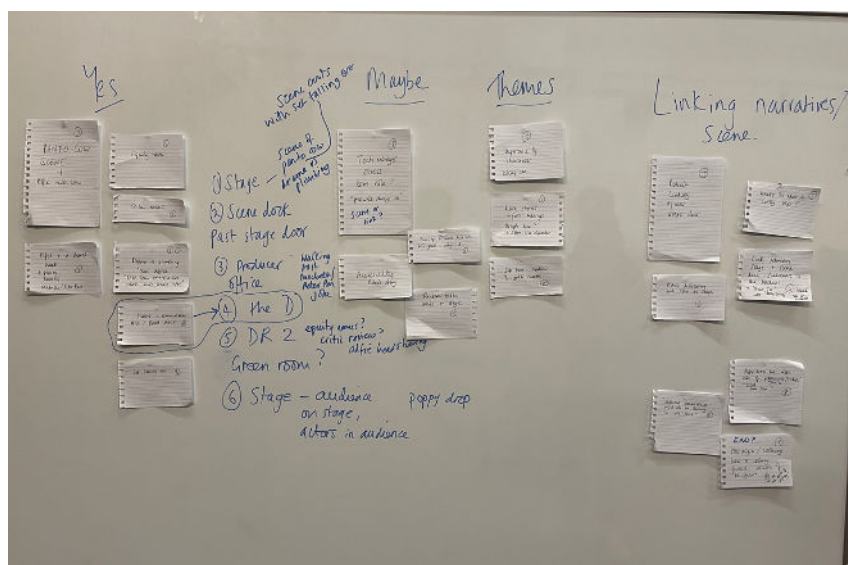
- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)

SELECTING MATERIAL FOR YOUR PIECE

Now that you have your interviews, you should share these with your whole company / group. This will mean that everybody has chance to input their ideas about what to include and which stories to represent.

Look at the planning sheets from our show (see images below) and use the planning sheet on the next page to help you start to filter through your materials and start thinking about what themes you want to focus on.

Tip: You may not know for certain what themes to focus on until you have devised lots of scenes based on lots of different ideas. Make sure you leave enough rehearsal time to fully explore which scenes / ideas work and which don't.



THEMES AND IDEAS WORKSHEET

Make as many copies of this as needed for your notes.

Interviewee Name:

Stand Out Moment 1: Transcript

Stand Out Moment 1: Key Themes / Ideas

Stand Out Moment 2: Transcript

Stand Out Moment 2: Key Themes / Ideas

SCENE PLANNING SHEET

Use this sheet to help rough out what scenes you want to make. Feel free to cut this up when you're done to help with assembling your scene order.

Scene Description:

Main Theme:

Definitely include, or maybe?

Scene Description:

Main Theme:

Definitely include, or maybe?

THROUGH LINE

Now that you have chosen what themes and ideas you want to work with, it is time to start thinking about your Through Line.

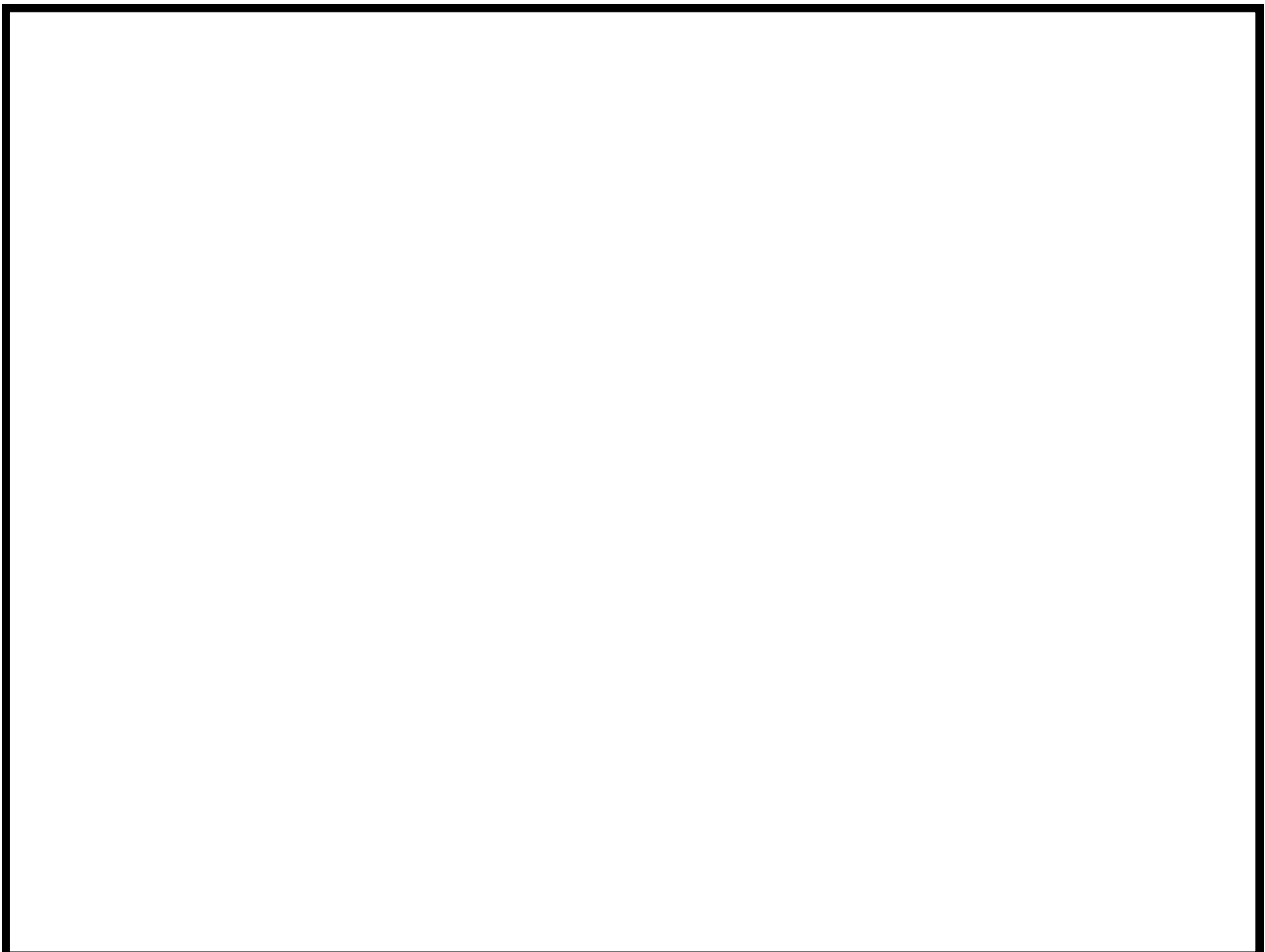
The Through Line is the thing that holds the piece together. It is often described as a thread that helps tie the scenes, themes and ideas together so that the audience can follow and understand what you are trying to portray in your piece.

Discuss and answer the following questions with your group:

- What's the narrative line that runs through the piece and ties it together?
- Is it one person's story or do you need a dramatic device to hold it together?

Tip: For our show, we had a number of elements that ran through the piece, but it was all tied together with the character of the Company Stage Manager, who led the audience through the stories. Your piece does not need to follow one specific story to have a Through Line, but there should be something that connects it all together.

Our Through Line:



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CHARACTER

Look back at the interview of your character if you are basing it on one of your interviewees. Will you try to reflect them exactly as they presented here or will you take the essence of them and add your own detail? Either is fine in verbatim theatre.

Use the fact sheet on the next page to find out as much as you can about them. If you are adding an additional character to enrich the piece, you will need to make these up.

You can then add depth to your character by completing the personality quiz on pages 10 and 11.

You can also hot seat the characters by thinking of questions to ask the cast. They will answer in role. Try this by asking each actor 5 questions they may not be expecting.

CHARACTER FACT SHEET

Full Name:

Age:

Pronouns:

Physical Appearance:

Height:

Hair Colour:

Eye Colour:

Visual / Hearing Aid:

Significant Clothing:

Significant Accessories:

Other Details:

Close Family / Friends:

Significant Job / Work History:

Other Notes:

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT QUIZ

If you are struggling to get to know your character, or just want to dive deeper into parts of them, have a look at the categories and questions below. Feel free to focus on certain areas or across all the categories below.

Physical Appearance:

1. How do they style their hair?
2. What kind of clothing do they wear?
3. Do they wear makeup? What kind?
4. What's their nationality?
5. Do they have any birthmarks?

Background / Lifestyle:

1. Where were they born?
2. Who are their parents?
3. Where do they live now?
4. What is their greatest achievement?
5. What's the most embarrassing thing that's happened to them?
6. If we searched their name on Google, what would we find?
7. When was the first time they fell in love?
8. What is their biggest secret?
9. What is their greatest regret?
10. Do they have any bad habits?
11. Did they attend university?

Interests / Hobbies:

1. What's their favourite movie?
2. What's their favourite food?
3. What TV shows do they watch?
4. What do they like to do for fun?
5. Do they have any hobbies?
6. What's their favourite colour?
7. What is their most treasured possession?
8. Which living / dead person would they most want to meet?

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT QUIZ PT.2

Relationships:

1. Who do they consider their closest friend or best friend?
2. Do they have a romantic partner?
3. Which family members are they close with?
4. Who do they share their deepest secrets with?
5. Do they have any co-workers they're close with? Any they can't stand?
6. Who do they trust? Who don't they trust?
7. Who would they turn to for help?
8. What is the relationship like with their parents?

Thoughts / Emotions:

1. What's their spirit animal?
2. What are their biggest pet peeves?
3. Do they consider themselves an introvert or an extrovert?
4. What does perfect happiness look like to them?
5. What is their greatest fear? What keeps them up at night?
6. Are they a glass-half-full or glass-half-empty kind of person?

Extension:

Now you have spent some time getting to know your character, start getting to know the other characters that will be appearing in your piece. You may want to use some of the above questions for a hot-seating exercise, or have a think about something your character may want to know about the other characters.

CHARACTER PROGRESSION

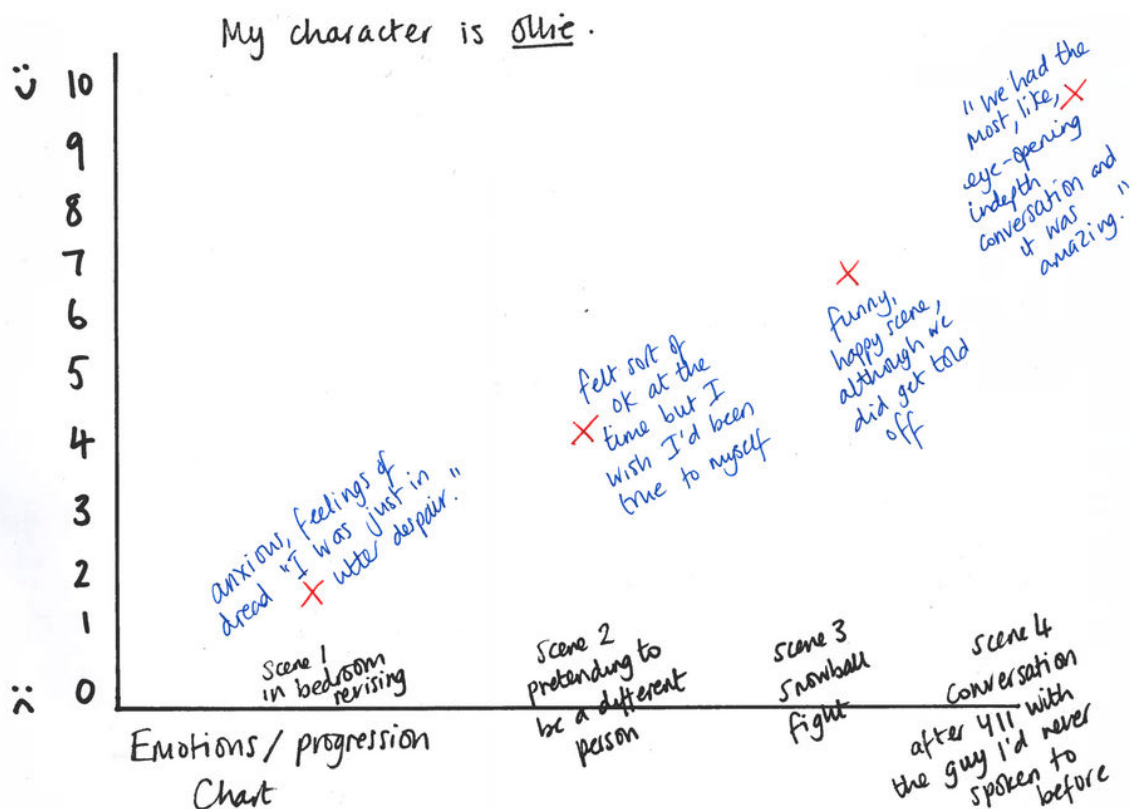
If your character appears more than once, how do they change as the story progresses?

Think back to Kizzy's wardrobe mistress character and how she became more hysterical throughout. Think about how Alfie's character of the back end of the cow became increasingly frustrated and concerned whilst looking for his front half, and then the relief of finding him at the end.

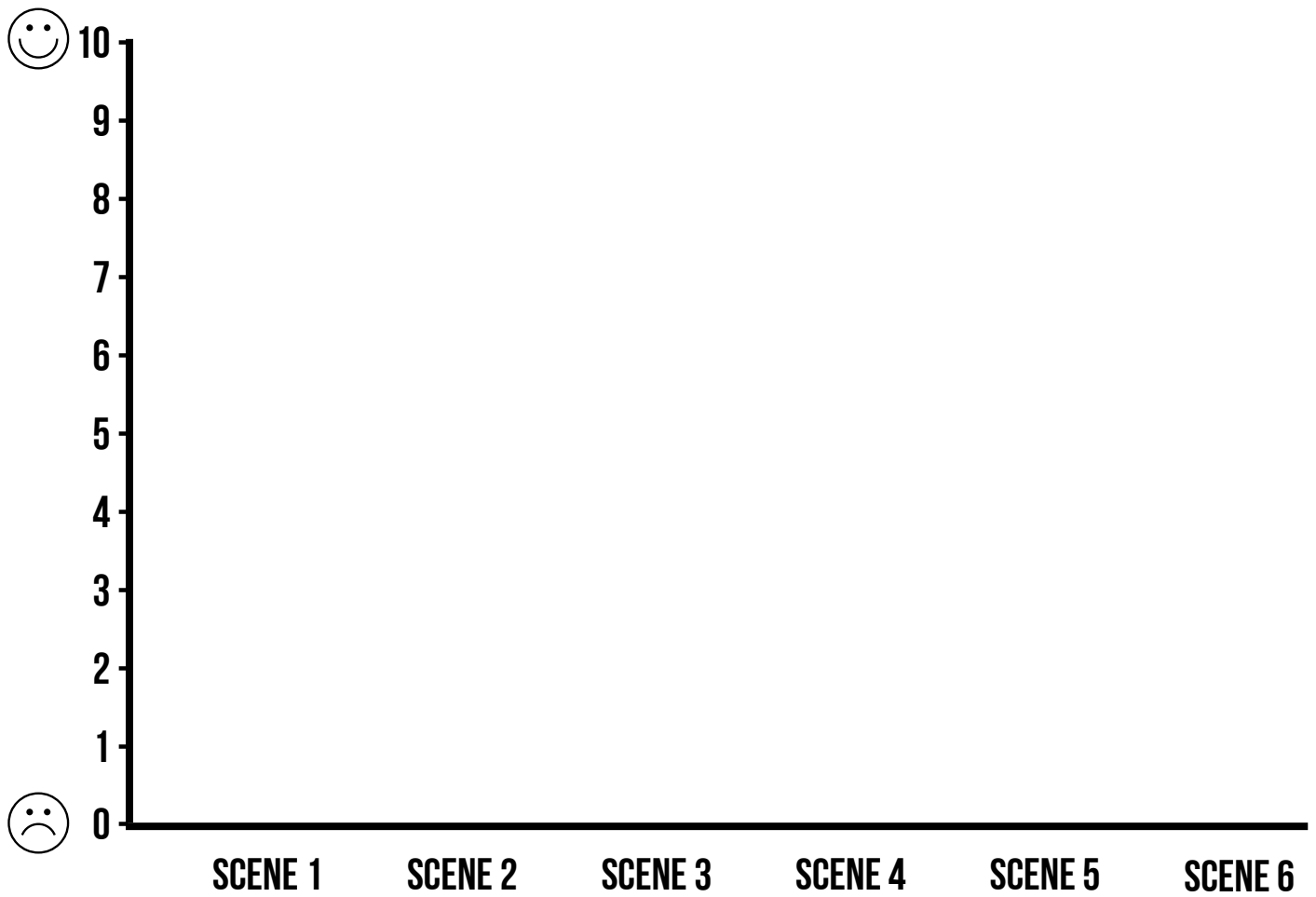
Each character should have an arc that is compelling and takes the audience on a journey. They should make sense for the character you have created, and the situations they find themselves in, and they should be something that the audience is going to feel something about.

We took a look at some hypothetical scenes based on our interview with Ollie (found via the QR Code on page 1), and plotted the character's progression through each of their key moments.

Take a look below, and have a go at making your own on next page.



CHARACTER PROGRESSION CHART



Tip: Your character's emotional progression doesn't have to be a straight line. It can be a curve or even a bit of a rollercoaster, just make sure it is authentic to the character.

LOCATING YOUR STORIES

Placing the stories

- Where do your stories need to be told? If you are in your hall / studio, can you create a realistic backdrop for the stories you want to tell.
- How will you place scenes together?

Locations are a hugely important part of verbatim theatre. Where a scene takes place can shift the way the audience feels and responds to a scene, and in turn, how the scene is used within the piece.

Have a look at the verbatim extracts you've chosen and see if you can find any that may work in different locations, and give it a go! We've put an example below from one of our interviews with Ollie.

Example:

Ollie verbatim extract:

Er, I think, probably in Year 11 and I think it was coming up to exam time so we'd done our mocks at that point, um and I'd done well in some. Um, I think the sciences I hadn't done too well in actually. Er, physics especially I was just in utter despair, um, and I remember, you know, I tried to revise every night and I felt like nothing was going in and I just sort of sit down in class and I'd feel this utter dread that I was never going to get it and the penny was never gonna drop and all this effort I was putting in was for nothing, and, um, it's really hard to convince yourself that you can do something when it feels you've got the odds stacked against you.

In this extract, Ollie talks about the stress and despair he felt whilst revising for his exams. You could set a scene about this in a bedroom, surrounded by paper and books and struggling to cope. Or, you could locate it in a classroom or library after school, still surrounded by books, but maybe there are other students or staff involved, or his parents if set at home.

There are so many options for scene locations - it can make or break a scene, so try them out in different places. If something isn't working in one of your scenes, but you love the message or extract, try looking for a new location and see how that affects the scene.

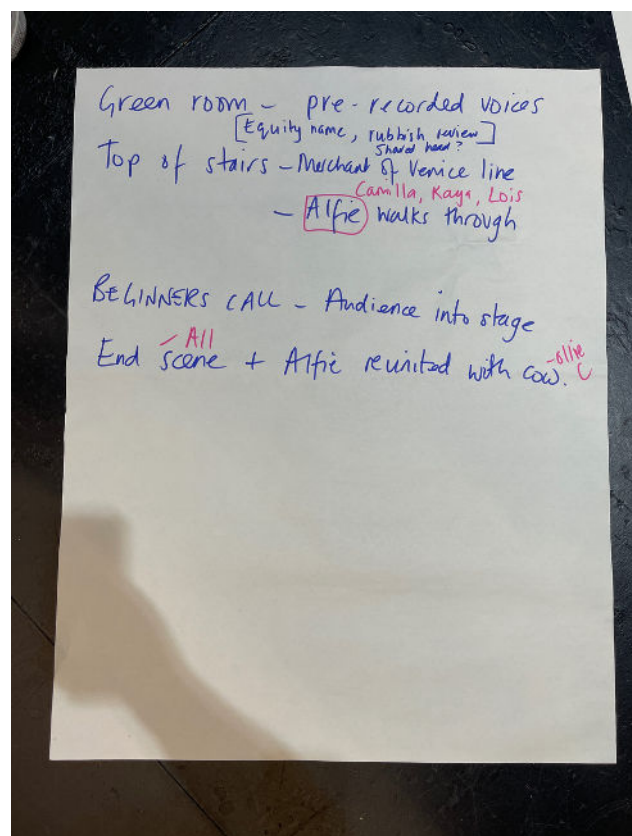
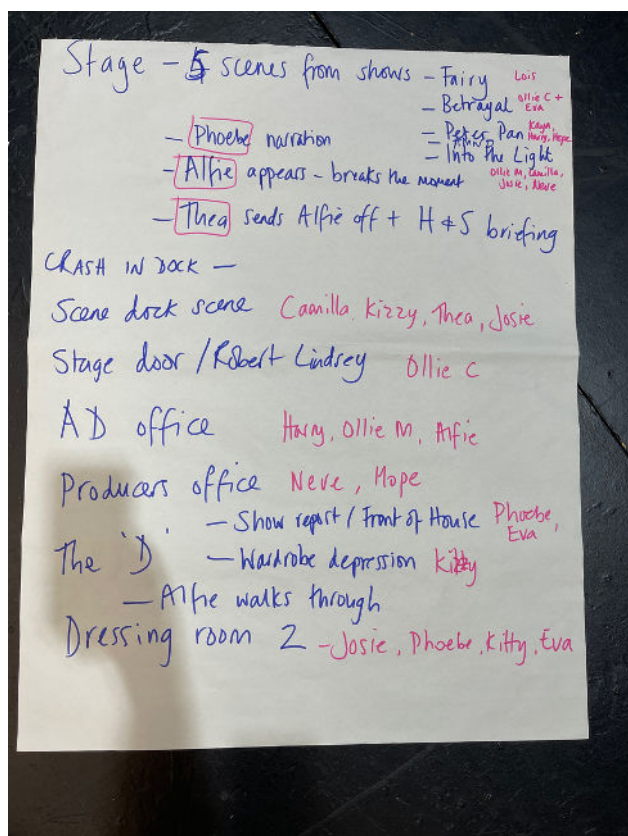
PLACING YOUR SCENES IN THE NARRATIVE

Think about which order the scenes should go in. You want to capture a mixture of poignant, serious, and light-hearted scenes - but your through line might dictate the natural order of them.

Once you have made the scenes from your verbatim extracts have a look at creating a running order for the scenes and consider how the flow of the piece would impact your audience and what that journey would look like for them - don't be scared to make radical changes, it often pays to be radical.

Tip: It is often helpful to have some constraints to help you make decisions. For us, we knew the route around the building quite early in the process, so we knew the dressing room scene and artistic director scene had to take place in those settings, and that then helped us to craft the scenes around it. So, in knowing that we were constrained by the artistic director scene being quite poignant, we chose to put a light-hearted scene either side keep it balanced.

Have a look at our running order below and using the scenes you've been working on, have a go at creating your own.



TITLE

What is your piece of theatre going to be called and how will you (or did you) arrive at that title? Maybe a starting point is to see what important themes are coming out of the testimonies, or maybe you can pick something one of the interviewees said.

Tip: Think about what you want your audience to know about the piece going into it. We wanted to make sure that our audience knew it was going to be a fun piece, but also rooted in stories of our past. So, 'The Back End Of The Cow and Other Stories' fit the bill quite well.

Use the space below to map out some of your thoughts for a title.

Title Ideas:

Our Title Choice:

TRAILER

Alongside your title, a trailer will tell your audience a lot about your piece and help them make a decision about whether or not they want to come along.

If you or someone in your group is interested in film or digital media, it is a great idea to create a short trailer for your piece, but there are lots of things to think about alongside just creating the trailer:

- How will you circulate the trailer?
- Which media could you use to reach your target audience?








Take a look back at our trailer to get some ideas. Pay attention to the length (1min is usually the longest you should do for social media), and how the style matches the content of the piece.

Use the space below to map out your ideas. Then take a look at the example storyboards from our trailer and use and the storyboard template to plan out your shoot.

Trailer Ideas:



STORYBOARD EXAMPLE

<p>Scene 1 > Shot 1</p>  <p>MS · Shallow Focus/LA/Hip Level/Single · Static</p> <p>Fade in to Scott removing cow body and looking around hopeful to find the front person Cast Corridor Entrance (D)</p>	<p>Scene 1 > Shot 2</p>  <p>WS · 2-Shot/Shallow Focus/LA/Hip Level · Static</p> <p>Scott leans out from behind door, looks around, still hopeful, if a little disheartened before looking at cow as if it is real Stage Door</p>
<p>Scene 1 > Shot 3</p>  <p>WS · 2-Shot/Shallow Focus/LA/Hip Level · Static</p> <p>Scott sits on steps and holds cow - person passes, Scott looks hopeful for the last time before disappointed FOH Steps</p>	<p>Scene 1 > Shot 4</p>  <p>WS · 2-Shot/Shallow Focus/Eye Level · Static</p> <p>Scott stands outside with cow, fed up. He shrugs, giving up, dropping the costume and shuffles off (shoes too big), revealing show title Front Door</p>
<p>Scene 1 > Shot 5</p>  <p>MCU · Shallow Focus/LA/Ground Level/Single · Static</p> <p>Feet shuffling across screen revealing show details (date, time, location, tickets etc.) FOH Steps</p>	<p>Scene 1 > Shot 6</p>  <p>MCU · Shallow Focus/LA/Ground Level/Single · Static</p> <p>Feet shuffling back the other way, revealing NYC logo FOH Steps</p>
<p>Scene > Shot 7</p>  <p>N/A · N/A · Static</p> <p>Fade to logo on white N/A</p>	

STORYBOARD TEMPLATE

SCENE #	SHOT #

INT / EXT

DAY / NIGHT

SCENE #	SHOT #

INT / EXT

DAY / NIGHT

SCENE #	SHOT #

INT / EXT

DAY / NIGHT

MARKETING COPY

Marketing Copy is what will be used on websites, in publications and across a variety of written media to communicate what your show is, and who it is for. As with the trailer and title, this often needs to be written ahead of creating the piece of theatre. Have a look at the copy we wrote for our show, and have a go at your own.

NYC presents 'The Back End of the Cow and Other Stories'.

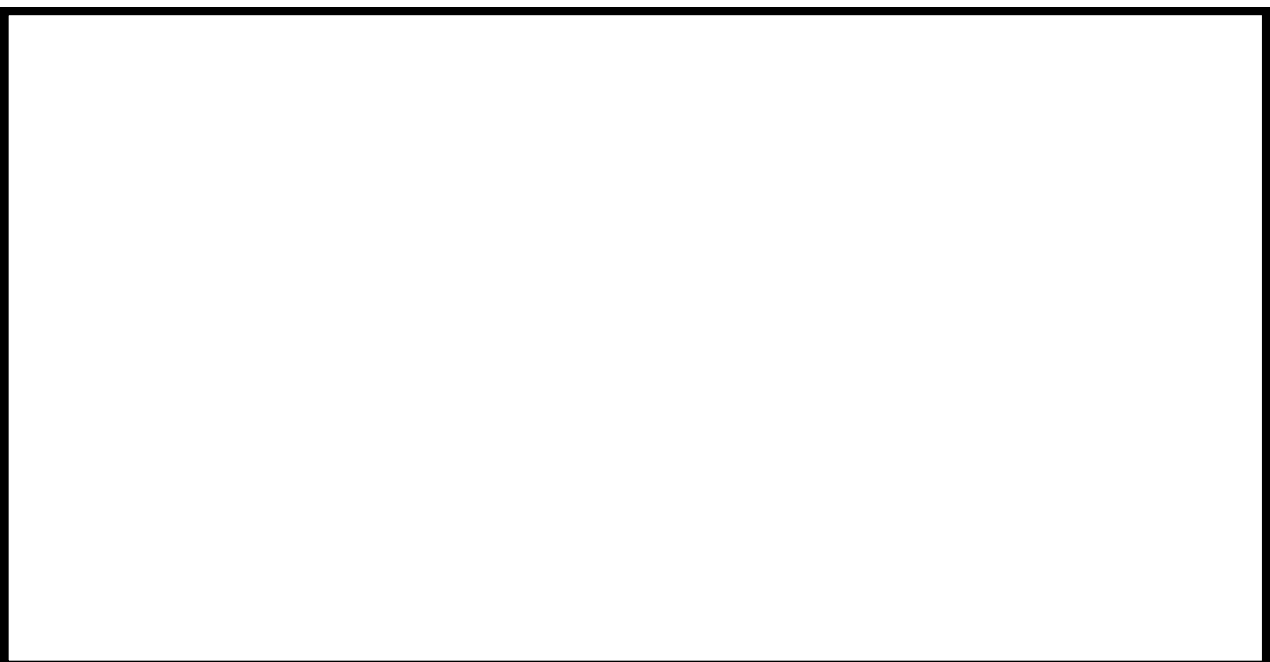
As part of The Stories We Tell Project, Northcott Young Company members have been busy interviewing a range of people with connections to the Northcott. From volunteer stewards to actors with a long history of treading the Northcott boards, from technical crew to former members of the Young Company. Our young people have been gathering stories and memories to use as inspiration for their own brand new show.

A cast of NYC young people will work with these stories and testimonies for an intensive period over the Easter holiday. This will result in a piece of promenade theatre to guide the audience through the lesser known parts of the Northcott. Through wardrobe to lighting desk, from stage to dressing room, who knows which stories will come to life?

Come and be guided by NYC through the Northcott's history while they add their voices to the archive of the future.

Multiple performances on Sunday 1st May.

Marketing Copy Ideas:



PROGRAMME & DESIGN

The final element of marketing that we will touch on is the graphic design of your programme and other materials. This can be a fantastic way for audiences to interact with your piece - through posting pictures of the programme on social media, or getting to know the cast through short biographies and photos. It is also a great chance to let your audience know about your process and decision making in the piece.

Have a look at our programme via the resources link at the front of this workbook.

A programme should serve several purposes:

- to give your audience information on the making of the show, including who is in the cast and creative teams
- it provides a lovely keepsake for people connected to the show
- it gives you the opportunity to thank the people who have helped you
- and perhaps it will add to the archive of shows and events at your school? Or be the start of one?

If a programme isn't what you want to do, have a think about creating a poster or flyer to help advertise your show. This often is what becomes the front cover of a programme, so is a great starting point.

Tip: We created our programme in Adobe InDesign, but there are loads of free tools you can use to create a well designed programme, without needing to be a designer. Have a look at Canva, it's a website with hundreds of templates and resources to help you get started.

LIGHT, SOUND AND STAGE MANAGEMENT

The NYC company created a running order of scenes, which we added to as we went along and which our actors could refer to in rehearsals and during the performance. Look at ours in the resources folder linked at the start of the workbook, and use the template below to add to yours as you develop your show.

Think about light and sound (see task below). If you are going to devise your piece as a promenade performance you may have to be realistic about what you can achieve. In a hall or studio you may decide to be more ambitious.

Tip: Always consider what your choices add to the performance. Sound and light should create an atmosphere which supports or enhances what you're trying to say and should reflect the tone of what's happening in the piece. Don't just play "I Believe in Miracles" because you can!

We used a Deputy Stage Manager (DSM) to add to the narrative and to add to the atmosphere of the backstage tour element of our piece. You may decide to have a DSM, who can cue in light and sound, or it may be easier to have a technician operating from a cue sheet. Look at the examples of our cue sheets (via the resource link at the beginning of this document) and use the blank template (page 28) to plan what yours will look like.

We really appreciated having a trained, professional Production Manager, which added an element of safety and support to the younger cast members. Look at our PM show plot via the resources link, and use the template on page 29 to enable you to write the instructions for your own Production Manager (who could even be your teacher?)

SCENE LIST TEMPLATE

Scene Number:

Scene Description:

Location:

Cast Involved:

Scene Number:

Scene Description:

Location:

Cast Involved:

Scene Number:

Scene Description:

Location:

Cast Involved:

Scene Number:

Scene Description:

Location:

Cast Involved:

Scene Number:

Scene Description:

Location:

Cast Involved:

HEALTH, SAFETY, CHAPERONES, TRANSITIONS ETC.

There is plenty to think about when it comes to the practicalities of your performance. From locations and timings, to audience numbers and their safety - it is really important to spend the time working through these things as a group to ensure everything goes off without a hitch.

You probably won't need to worry about chaperones as we did, and you will likely know your setting really well, but you will need to think about how you will transition from one scene to the next. If you're touring an audience, do you need to integrate a health and safety briefing? Look back at what Thea includes in hers in our show (via the link at the start of this document).

If you are making a promenade piece, you may want to plot it like the example in our resources folder. This could act as a really helpful working document to visualise which scenes happen where, and to help you consider placing scenes which may have happened away from the school.

THE MESSAGE OF YOUR PIECE

It's really important that you are all clear and on the same page about the message you want to convey. What do you want your audience to leave thinking about? How will you achieve this?

Try writing a section like we used at the end of our show (which you can see below). You may not choose to include it in your finished piece, but it will be really helpful in summing up what you, as a company, want to say to your audience.

The Back End Of The Cow and Other Stories - End Poem

PHOEBE: And so our story has come to an end. But before you go, we ask you to do one thing.

CAMILA: Look upon the room around you. And feel the past that surrounds you once again.

JOSIE: Because the theatre hears every voice, and tells every story.

ALFIE: Allowing anybody to walk in another's shoes.

HARRY: Yet there are some who think we shouldn't tell these tales.

HOPE: And attempt to shut the vault on our rich history.

EVA: But we will not let these efforts succeed.

KITTY: And instead make our voices even louder.

OLLIE: For our generation still loves the theatre. As we have learned so much from what came before.

KIZZY: And we'll continue to teach the future, with our own place in the archive.

KAYA: Because without actors, we'd all be shouting at a wall.

NEVE: Without technicians, we'd all be dancing in the dark.

PHOEBE: And without the stage, what would all the world be?

THEA: So we thank you for listening to our story, even if this one remains unresolved...

EVALUATING YOUR PIECE

Company Feedback

Think about what you, as a group of theatre makers, have gained from this process. Were you pleased with the results? What were the most challenging parts? What would you do differently next time?

If you were assessed as part of your course for this project, what was the feedback and what is your response to this?

Audience Feedback

Think about how you will find out what your audience thought. If you have someone in charge of marketing / media, could they record some Vox Pops at the end? Could you design a simple questionnaire for people to fill in?

CONCLUSION

We really hope you have found this workbook useful in creating your piece of verbatim theatre. Why not add all your process documents to the end of this workbook and create the start of your own performance archive?

As we said in the videos, we would love to see what you have been working on, so please do get in touch and share your work with us. Plus, feel free to get in touch with any questions you have about this resource, our process or anything else.

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