

MY EXPERIENCE - PLATFORM 4'S *DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS MASHUP* RND

10/01/20 Hannah Parsons

Hi, my name's Hannah - I'm a freelance theatre technician, stage manager, sound designer, and final-year Music student at the University of Southampton.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity for work experience with Platform 4 during their devising period at Winchester University. Having seen *Invisible Music* in the Turner Sims a few years ago, I was very excited to join the team on *Day of the Triffids Mashup* for a week (even if it was in deadline season!).

DAY 1 - 06/01 - INTRODUCTIONS AND PROCESS

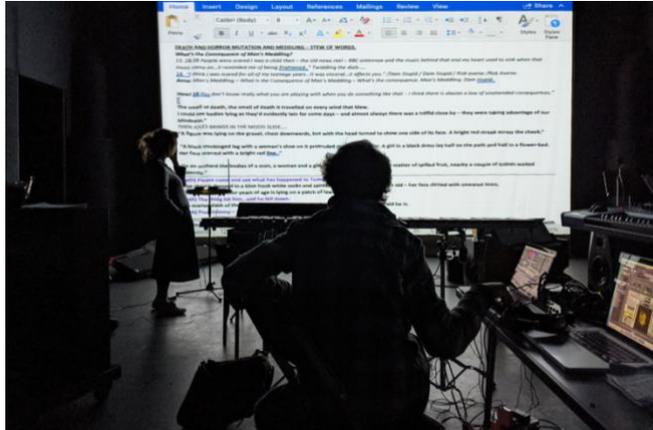
At the University's reception, I ran into Jules and Simon, who were both very welcoming, and filled me in on where they were in the process so far. The show is some time into its production period, and I was going to be experiencing script development and musical composition of several sections of the show. This was certainly a new experience for me - having mainly worked with smaller companies, it was the first time I'd seen such experienced artists in this stage of the creative process.

First walking into the rehearsal space, I encountered dozens of instruments that I wish I had the savings for - a Minimoog, MalletKAT, dulcitone, harmonium, dulcimer, Theremin, a cactus (yes, a cactus) and more. I could tell I was in for an exciting week.

Day of The Triffids Mashup Music uses both acoustic and synthesized instruments and samples. As well as their instruments, Cath and Jill provided vocals, and Pete, Matt and Jules were on synths. I was shown the various setups on Qlab, Reaktor, Logic and Ableton, from which I took away a lot of ideas for sound design across the week.

Jules especially was hosting a wealth of analogue synths and effects pedals, which I was lucky enough to try out. It was a pleasant change to my usual tapping around on Logic. It's not every day you get to play an original Minimoog and have in-depth conversations about subtractive synthesis.

Throughout the day, the company were developing *Travelling Music*, *Shirning Farm*, and *Stew of Words* working on an already-written script from earlier sessions. Watching an artist-led process was something very new for me, and I enjoyed watching all five musicians collaborate in a semi-improvised style. My favourite section from that day was perhaps the pastoral *Shirning Farm*. The style of devising was really exciting to watch and made me reflect on my own creative processes.



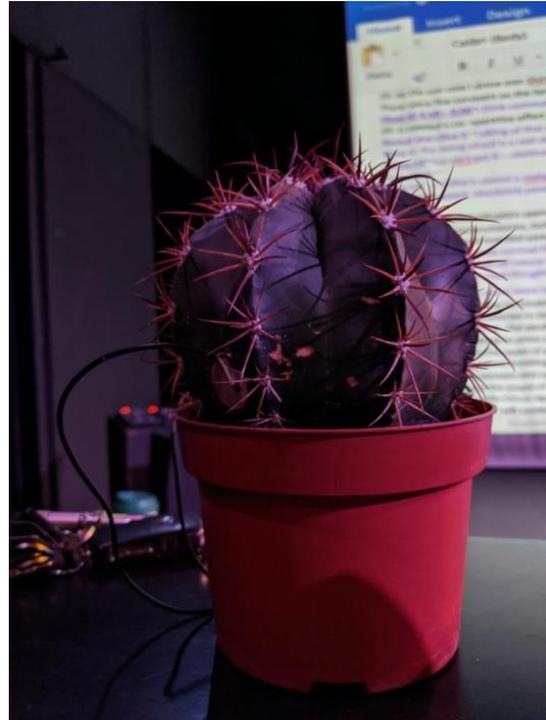
Perhaps what I took away from the first day most was how important establishing a good team and working dynamic is within any creative process. From the outset, watching Platform 4 work in such a focused yet enjoyable working environment was a joy.

DAY 2 - 07/01 AFTERNOON – IMPROV ON TRAVELLING MUSIC

On Tuesday I joined the team just before their lunch break; they'd been working on *Travelling Music* and *Shirning Farm* in the morning.

I spent my time getting myself acquainted with the LX rig, ready for focus and some busking for the filming session later in the week. During this time, I also met Steve, who was assisting with the lighting, and David, a senior theatre technician at the Performance Gym.

During work breaks, I got to know the whole creative team. I talked to Pete about his previous experience working with folk artists and other projects he's worked on, along with his more recent passion for botany. Matt showed me his cactus setup with contact mics and how to play it, Simon and I discussed our mutual interest in jazz, Jill talked about the theatre scene in the Midlands, and Cath showed me pictures of her artwork, and her incredibly photogenic cat, Mr Boodles. The more I talked to everyone, the more my list of recommended tunes/ software/ albums/ sessions I needed to look up to throughout the week grew, from The Clash and Adam and the Ants to John Coltrane's *Ascension*. There was such a range of interests within the group, it was always a joy to talk with everyone.



Being able to talk with such seasoned creatives about my own interests and experiences gave me clarity on what art forms matter to me, and what direction I want to take with my own future freelance work. Conversations like these were very valuable to me throughout the week.

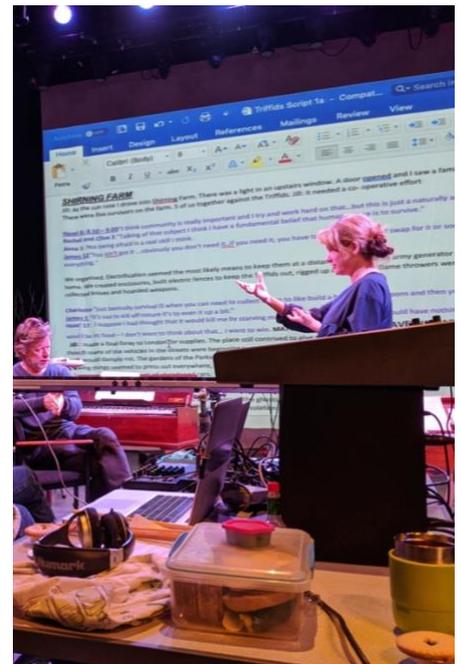
During rehearsal, I assisted in with script-rolling and editing as the run-throughs commenced. In this time, I saw more clearly how the themes from the book were being brought out in the music, and how parts of the show were starting to slot together.

In particular, I enjoyed watching the section about *Man's Meddling*, and how it included samples local people in the allotments talking about their lots, weeds, and reading passages from the book, to make up the sequence. This all added a local touch to the piece.

DAY 3 - 08/01 - IMPROV & HELP WITH REHEARSALS

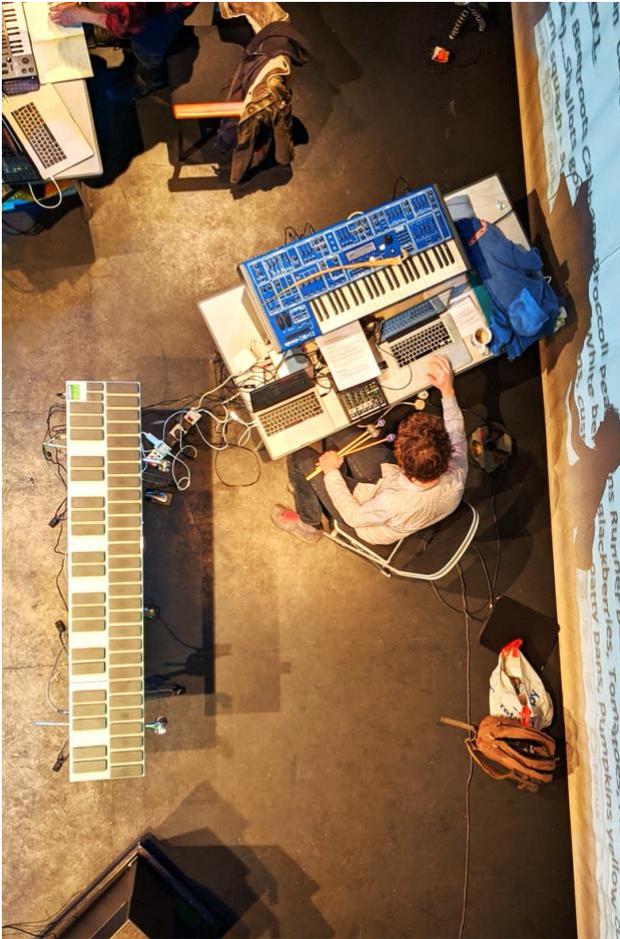
Wednesday, I stayed at the University until lunchtime. I further assisted with the script during rehearsals, interspersed with chats with Jules about the analogue synth effects he was running through his double bass throughout the rehearsal.

I also took some pictures of people in action, here are a few of my favourites:



DAY 4 - 09/01 - LX FOCUS & SET DESIGN

During Thursday, the stage's layout was now ready for Friday's filming, so I spent part of the day focusing LX and setting up the GIO for busking.



I had a great time running around the rig's bridges focusing lanterns around in the dusty darkness and heat; the familiar work of technical theatre. Whilst on the bridge, I did catch some nice views of everyone below: on the left is a photo of Pete at his desk.

Whilst focusing and playing around with lighting states, I also had the chance to speak to Simon about his ideas for the set and lighting design for the show. Gaining insight into this element of production at this stage in the design process I found particularly interesting, especially with him at the LX desk with me.

Everyone below me was rehearsing a more nightmarish section of the show, which included some free jazz, which was quite the soundtrack for the day.

DAY 5 - 10/01 - FILMING & LX BUSKING

Friday was my last day with Platform 4, I spent most of the rehearsal period busking at the LX desk for the filming session. This developed my eye for lighting design even further, and I was glad to have that opportunity for the practice.

Having seen the whole piece (from earlier RnDs, too) in a run-through for the filming, I am really excited for when the show starts its tour in September.

At the end of the day, I exchanged email addresses with everyone in the team to keep in touch, and hope to see them all again at a later stage.



SO, HOW WAS YOUR WEEK?

Overall, the week was a great experience for me. Seeing a real-life working environment of this type of show – described by Jill as a live concept album – was intriguing and makes me want to create projects like these of my own. As mentioned earlier, the working dynamic everyone had together made for an exceptionally enjoyable atmosphere; I was very glad to have observed this part of the devising process and to have the time for conversations with the whole team throughout the week.

Thanks to Cath for organising this, I hope to see you all again soon.

Platform 4's 'Day of the Triffids Mash Up' Premieres @ Theatre Royal Winchester 3/4 Sept 2020

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