



RESOURCE TRANSCRIPTS

STAND & DELIVER

DIRECTOR | JEMIMA LEVICK

I suppose it's okay it goes through phases for me. So with this show particularly, this started as an idea that Frances and I talked about when we were working on a show in Leeds actually. Um and she appeared with this article and was like, "Oh, this is an amazing story." and was dead excited about it. We both pitched it to the National Theatre of Scotland as an idea in 2020 those conversations started. And I suppose the beginning of that because starts as a conversation with Frances about what the angle might be. And then that conversation brings in the producers from uh National Theatre of Scotland. But then the the the writing process sort of begins and Frances does a first draft. And so my kind of relationship with it, even though I know it's happening, only really kicks in once she's delivered a first draft that I get a chance to read. And that's when we start working together. So with this show we met, we did notes, but the first meeting I had with her was a meeting with her and Rosie Kellagher who's the literary manager at the National Theatre of Scotland. And we um we talked through notes. So I kind of led on quite a lot of that conversation. It partly because Frances and I have worked together so many times that we have quite a decent shorthand. It was quickly after that that the National Theatre of Scotland wanted us to do a development on it in the room with actors. So that was in 2023. And in that process that's really when I'm focusing on the dramaturgy of the play and looking at how it works with Frances. [music]

And Frances and I have a very specific way of working when we're working with actors in the room. We'll work we'll read it through. We'll stop after each scene and we'll talk through every scene. It's about kind of the structure and the character development and the story rather than how I'm going to stage it. It's about looking at the bigger picture. So, we will work on sections and then more often than not what happens is that Frances goes away at the end of that day and starts rewriting those bits and will send it to me at some hellish hour of the night and I'll get up early and read it and then we'll take it into the room the next day. So, at that point it's really about looking at the bigger picture and seeing if the play works in and of itself. There was quite a lot of things that she had included in that draft and at that point it was like a 10-hander, I think, and it was still had music in it. It was a really big play, felt like more of a musical, I suppose, as you might kind of see on the, you know, a regular kind of touring commercial stage. And we got to the end of that week and we were really pleased where we'd managed to get to, but there was an awful lot still to do. And then we began a conversation with the producers and quite often this happens when they were like, "We don't feel it's working. We want to try something new with it and make it smaller, make it more accessible, put it into smaller venues." And actually it was Frances because she had already done the work with the women, she'd already interviewed them, she'd done workshops with them. I hadn't met them at all at this point. She came up with a solution about making it a six-hander and that they would become the band as well. I think Frances quite often she gets her characters to talk to the audience all the time and so she sort of moved it into this kind of new genre where actually the actors on stage are playing the characters who are telling the audience what's happening and it sort of created this immediacy in this new draft, which was really exciting. Um and then we did more development. So, we did two dramaturgical development sessions with actors, different actors both times, um much smaller casts, no music at this point. It was just four actors. Um worked through again whether or not the characters worked, worked out what the doubling might be, how people might play different characters. We knew the music would be in there and at that point we brought in Claire McKenzie who was the musical arranger and she just came in not to play music but just to listen to the story to so we could understand what the structure of the play needed in order to get music into it and what the right music would be and what the songs would be doing. So again, more development to look at what the size and the scale of it is and the story and the structure and all of those things and then

we did a music development where we just played through the music. So that was Claire leading that really and then they just read it all through and played the music at the same time and we were like, "Okay, good. That felt like we had landed on what the play needed to be." Now all the way through this time, this is like five years of process where I haven't thought for one minute about how I'm going to stage it just because for me, if I start thinking about how I'm going to stage something too soon, I'm making production decisions before I'm making sure the play is right and that the play is doing what I want we need it to do for the audience and what Frances is trying to do. So it's a very different kind of head space. And then of course, we knew production was around the corner and I was like, "Oh no, I've got to I've got to stage this thing." And I think it's one of the hardest things I've ever had to direct because the story is so drives very quickly all the time. The energy that is required to perform it is really huge. They're in lots of different locations. They're playing lots of different characters. So my kind of next stage once we knew it was going ahead was to go through the design process and at that point I realized that what I needed in order to move into the production to sort of deliver on my process was just a space that we could play in. Even at that stage I had no idea how I was going to use it. I just knew that I needed Jess Worrall, the designer, to create me a space that I could make it up when we got there. And I'd sort of do it on my feet, basically. I suppose my process once I get into the room is about it's always action-driven for me. So, the first week I usually spend around the table talking about what the scene is with Frances in the room so that the actors can kind of tap into the process we've been through through the writing process and the dramaturgical process. So, they're reading it for the first time. They're kind of learning what the shape of it is. She's there to answer questions. And it's an an opportunity for them to drill into what it is and what it's about and things that they don't understand. Even that's that's tiny things like words they don't understand. But, it's sort of about putting us all in the same plain so they have kind of caught up with me and Frances. And through that week I start thinking about how I might start staging things. Once we get on our feet, it's about trying to find the shape and the space of it. But, my process is always about making sure the actors know what they're doing in that scene in terms of what they're trying to do to the other characters, what their character's trying to do to the other characters, and also where their character needs to get to in order to get to the next bit. So, it's about looking at that that kind of overarching journey, but also their journey within each scene, what they need to achieve. And then, it's about kind of working that out scene by scene. I suppose what I think of it as is I sketch things first. We sketch a shape of the play. Then, we start colouring it in. And right the way through the process, and even now while the show's on the road, it's about shading it in and colouring it in and getting all the detail into the performance. You can't ever go into a scene and know exactly where all of it is. But, you're about it's about building up that picture and that process. And so that the actors always have something to think about um that they've got something to try and something [music] somewhere else to go with it.

We were working with Robyn Ferguson, who's the casting associate at the National Theatre of Scotland, who's brilliant and who I've worked with in the past. And so, we have quite a good shorthand. She knows what kind of actors I like to work with and that I sort of, you know, I like actors who can respond to my sort of actioning process, I suppose. Um, but it was really difficult because we were asking the actors to do so much. So, we were asking for people who could play instruments, often multi-instrument, so not just guitar, but lead guitar, not just rhythm. Ideally, they'd be able to play bass. Could they play drums? Had they ever had experience with any other instruments that could be useful to us? So, then there was the instrumental part of it. Um, they needed to be able to sing. Like, we Initially, we thought that the character of Maggie would sing all the songs. And then through the development process, in fact, the music workshop that we did, we realized that it took Maggie out of too many things if she was always the one singing the songs. And actually, if we could get other people to sing them, we should. So, then all of a sudden, we're asking people to be able to sing and not just hold a tune, like lead a song. It's also asking them to be able to multi-role. So, like the part of Finley was particularly difficult because we knew that we wanted him to play Finley, who's 17. We knew he'd play Jimmy, who was in his mid to late 40s. That would be sort of how you'd cast it if you were just normally casting it. We thought he might play Bob Charters,

although we thought Maggie might be able to play that part. So, that's another, like, I don't know, 40-year-old, 50-year-old man. Um, and at that point, you're looking like what age are you looking for? It's really hard to tell. So, you're looking for character actors who can really dig into those parts. It was quite a bit of accent work as well. So, you know, so we can help them with that to a certain degree, but we went into it going ideally we'd just like to see people from the West Coast because they need to be able to deliver a legitimate Greenock accent. Nobody wants to go to Greenock and see their story told wrong with the wrong voice. And indeed there's other accents that kind of pop up in the play. So it was a really big ask. We saw a lot of people, a lot of a lot of actors. We did an open call out actually on Spotlight because we thought well we might as well just try and see who else is out there and they read loads of different material. So we had a whole band set up and people would come in and we'd go, "Can you play that? Can you play this?" And I think the people reading for Finley and reading for Kathy read four or five different characters just for the audition. So it's a lot of work to put in. And we always knew Helen wouldn't sing or play an instrument. We always knew she should slightly sit separately to that, but actually, although that should have made it easier, it made it harder because because well it opens doors to lots of really exceptional actors. Well, lots of the multi-rolling characters, the difficult bit about them is they don't have a huge character arc because they often just come in, they're in it for a few, you know, a page and then they're gone again. For me it's often about finding the thing that differentiates them from the other characters that they play. So like often you can do that with accents. So like for Aaron playing Finley who's from Greenock, Mr. Smith, you know, we were like actually as a union man in the '80s he might well have been from the north of England, but she's travelled to London, so we also need to tell the story of where she's gone, so we want to make him from London just to sort of help with the storytelling of that. So Mr. Smith sounds completely different from Finley and he also has a very different energy. So it was always Finley was light and bright and young and naive, so it's about keeping that energy in him, whereas Mr. Smith is a man who sits all the time, is extremely, supremely confident, and sits behind a desk kind of dictating what people do. Now, I don't know what Mr. Smith is really like at all, but for the purposes of the story, we needed to send him into a place that was the sort of direct opposite of what Finley was to help Aaron differentiate quickly, and then it became about a jigsaw cause then of course you've got the jigsaw of you're putting families together, and whoever's playing Helen needs to be able to play Finley's mum, and does that look feasible? And there was a terrific actor who read for Helen, and we really loved her. We thought she was brilliant, and she just looked like his sister. We were like, well, that's not going to work. So, yeah, it's a big puzzle piece, and I'm absolutely thrilled with where we ended up because it could have been a very different story, [music] I think.

I mean, the key themes really are about about community and protest and politics, and you know, the politics of a community really, and the kind of complexities of how people speak to each other and what's important and what you believe in, fighting for what you believe in. That kind of feels like the most important thing. I think the family part of it is a really key theme in that you have two sets of families. You have the kind of Cathy and Maggie Wallace sisters, and then you have the Monaghan family, and how these kind of events really shake entire families and indeed the communities that they are part of. So, when you've got six actors playing 240 people, you can't really go into like how this really shakes the wider community because 200 I mean, they started with 240, they ended up with 140. So, there's a hundred people there that you've not told the story of why they had to leave it, and that's kind of critical to the the storytelling of it. And it's interesting if we talk to young people and they go, "Well, why don't she go and get another job?" But like 1981 in the context of that time, you know, there weren't other jobs. Couldn't do that. That wasn't a thing. Yeah, there's something about that the understanding of what that kind of event does to a community which I think is like a key theme really. Um the family bits I always think that the scenes with the Monaghan family when she goes home and her husband's going, you know, it's my way and she's paying for all her train journeys. Even though that's a very small thing, actually that's really profound in terms of the way that they're living and how this has changed their lives. You know, she's she's no longer just going to work anymore. She's going to work for 12 hours a day and she's jet-setting all over the place to talk to people. And of course it's amazing and exciting, but as she says at the end of the play, it wasn't

something to shout about at that time. You know, so people were worried that you were militant and it might single you out as someone not to be employed. So, I think that scene where she talks about, you know, going getting the train with the full by soap powder vouchers. Think that scene and then when he comes to see her on the roof and he says, "Look, I support you." And he was a he's a good guy and he says, you know, and she goes, "I I don't really know how to stop it actually, but I know it's me, you know, it's not up to me anymore." And he says, "No, I know." And it's gotten bigger than she ever imagined it would. And Helen even now would say that was true. That she says, "So, you know, if I'd known how long it would have lasted, I probably wouldn't have done it actually." We were always so busy celebrating the win and the amazing change that that made for a lot of people, it's easy to forget the you know, the impact of that at home. And Finley Monaghan senior did stick by her, but there were a lot of families that, you know, would have fallen apart. There was people who didn't want to talk about it. It was a difficult time. So, I think there's something for me about that. And also the moment where the journey that Maggie goes on through the play where she starts out going, "I don't even want to work here. I don't even like sewing." to becoming a public speaker and meeting, you know, celebrities out on the road and being really very good at it. Um and Kathy, her sister, her real-life sister, says, "Oh, I remember when I saw her on the telly and I just couldn't believe it was my sister." That the journey that Maggie goes on in terms of that kind of journey of self-discovery, I think, is a really key theme, as well, that actually this young woman it changed her life, you know, because she found her who she was through the power of protest. And then she says, "I don't want it to finish, you know, actually I really love it." And then when it did finish, she had to go back to her old life, you know, and I think we sort of... Yeah, the sort of the evolution of all those women and the sense of self and they even now they sort of can't believe what they've done.

[music] The thing about the the social club is it can be anything, so that's really useful. And also because like it feels political in and of itself because, you know, the curtains are red, which feels like the colour of labour, you know, and then you kind of go, "Oh, that's really you know, that's sort of interesting." And there's something about it being every person's space, as well, which is really nice. Um I mean, physically, what we knew we had was a lot of chairs and a lot of tables, and it's remarkable what you can do with a lot of chairs and a lot of tables. We didn't know what those chairs or tables would be until we had them. Doors are always really useful because you can do a lot of entrances and exits and have a bit of fun with that. And indeed, if you're talking about a sitting in somewhere you barricade yourself in, you sort of got to get a door. When Frances first saw a picture of the set, she went, "Well, where are they going to barricade themselves in? There's two doors." And I was like, "Well, we'll just do one door. They can have to be able to go on and off anyway." And she went And she went, "All right, okay." Um so we sort of just tried to do it through all the stuff that you would have in a social club. So, we were like beer crates and stuff like that that would be lying around in a social club. How can we repurpose those to serve our purposes? So, like when Alec Anderson first arrives, he comes through the door. He's carrying a beer crate. Now, he because he never would have done that. He would he's a maintenance man in a factory. Yeah, so the sort of beer crates become something else and then Maggie sits on them later and they sort of get left behind. The tables work really hard. Like we stand on them, we sit on them, they become a roof. And of of course also we're kind of changing the space with lighting and sound and everything else. We're sort of you know, the moment you change the lighting and you play some seagulls, you go, "Oh, we're outside. That's I know where we are." Um but we tried to keep it within the world of the social club rather than the world of the factory. But then even then we knew we had to to cheat sometimes because it was like you can't really tell the story of a denim jeans factory and never see any denim. So, of course they were all dressed in denim. We were like we sort of need to see them working on that fabric. So, we needed to introduce the fabric of the denim as well. But really it was a case of going, "What have we got and how can we use it interestingly?" So, like you know, in a social club you'd have cardboard because you'd get deliveries. So, we were like, "Well, they can sleep on those things." We sort of also had to create a window that they could have an idea of seeing to the outside world. So, we we're looking at pictures of factory and we're like, "Actually quite a lot of factories have those very high-up windows." We're like, "Well, that's quite useful because then you just stand on a chair to look out of

the window." And then we so we can light their faces in a certain way. But if you're stood on a chair, you're definitely doing something different to what you're doing just generally. So, yes, it's really about looking at what you've got and seeing how to make it work in the moment.

[music] I think it's really important today because you know, it's about standing up for what you believe in, and that working. And that for me is every reason to do it. I mean, yes, it's a celebration of these brilliant women whose history hasn't been told. I think that's something that lots of people are aware of that often we tell the stories of history through a patriarchal lens, and actually often it's men's stories because they were the ones who were taught to write. So, you know, they were the ones who could document their history. We don't focus enough even on more recent, you know, contemporary history on women's stories. So, that feels really important in terms of celebrating what they achieved, the importance of standing up for what you believe in and what is right, and actually the right to protest, which I think we talk about but we don't necessarily always know what the outcome is we're looking for, or indeed what the potential of that outcome can be. And this is a positive story of protest that I mean, look, it really took it out of a lot of those people, and that is really tough, and you know, it wasn't plain sailing by any stretch of the imagination. And even though they did win, they win and they they won and they didn't win because, you know, they only kept the jobs for another 3 years. But there is something I think absolutely essential to our social and emotional well-being to know that sometimes these stories do work out well, you know, and that we've got to believe and we've got to do what's right, and actually we need to look after each other. So, again, that's sort of that story about community, about going I think Helen has a brilliant line in the play about, you know, I'm just wanting a job, one for me and one for those around me. And I think in a world where we can be really very, um, inward-looking and self-centered about our own journey. How are we looking after the other people that are around us as well? And that, you know, together we're stronger and if we work together rather than just staring down the lens of a screen.

CAST | HANNAH & ARON

We kind of meet them at two different starts. So we meet them initially. I think we decided it was November 1981. So the strike's over. We've come back to this working man's club and we know we've won and we know who everyone is and we know what we've been through and we're kind of happy. Yeah, we've seen it all through. And then we meet them again and we get into the story in January 1980. Yeah. At the beginning of the beginning before we have the problems with the Americans and the sit in. So we meet them at two different stages. One where they know everything. Mhm. And one before they're sort of ignorant to anything that's going to happen that and that anything could possibly go wrong.

[music] When I got the audition through, I actually read it all because I was really interested in the story and I wanted I thought, "Oh, it's got loads of potential and I think it'll be great." So, I'd read it already and then when it got to the rehearsal room, we had a week of table work anyway. So, we actually spent quite a lot of time reading it, which was good. So, we went through it like quite methodically, which was really helpful and I think actually really massively helped to like understand what's going on. feel like I didn't really understand the play entirely until I heard it out loud. But I'm I'm like that way. I don't really read very well. Yeah. Neither. It doesn't sort of connect to my imagination all the time. And then when I hear it, especially with actors, like really bringing it to life around the table. It's so much easier. Yeah. To understand. There's a lot of actors that have ADHD and also dyslexia as well. And I think, you know, reading scripts is hard because they're really long and Yeah. And context is really key and stuff. So I think read throughs are great for that cuz then like Aaron says it brings people to life and then you go oh right that makes sense that joke or whatever you know and luckily because it's a thing that actually happened there was a lot of research there just on the internet straight to YouTube straight to YouTube I know that rig arts from greenock they did a community project around it as well and actually I was getting drum lessons from my drummer who's from green and she was like you should watch this documentary that we made it here at the community hub so that was cool so I felt like I was already immersed in the ingredient community life before I'd even really started the job which was fun. But we had music rehearsals. That was the first thing we did. That was really invaluable. Actually, we had three days of just music. No one else, just us, the band. And that was really great to meet each other and to practice the songs and go away and have a bit of time to process. Some of us read music, but quite a few of us do it by ear. So, it just takes a we bit longer for me to like for it to sink in. So, that was really useful, wasn't it? Yeah. Yeah. And in hindsight, I think that was the first thing I got to a level of being away from the tabs and away from the thing and just second nature, which when we first approached it, we were going, geez, I mean, this the music is hard now. We got to act on top of that. We got to dance on top of that and we got to tell the story in front of that. But I think that was the right approach. I don't know who figured that out, but I think it had to be because there was so much music. So like we just had to prioritize that for a bit and we knew that the lines would come and stuff like that but we just wanted to get the music as you say like off book so that we could be in the play with music and I thought the way I did it was cheat sheet like say a score has got like five pages of music. I was like, I just need one sheet that tells me literally like the harmony I've got to sing as in the lyrics. And then sometimes I would write like E, A, or whatever chord is above that lyric. And then it would just be one piece of paper for each song. And that's how I learned it because I thought if I just carry the score around, I'll never let it go. And actually, I needed to do that. So I would travel around the set and just leave cheat sheets in different spots. And that's kind of how I learned it. At a certain point in rehearsals, it felt like you're being attacked on all sides [laughter] because you got your MD asking you something, choreographer asking you something, do you mind going, "Remember this acting note." And so part of me is like, "Yeah, I can only one at a time." But I think I trusted all of them so much. I thought,

"Well, you know what you want. You know what you're asking." I think when you trust your creative team, that helps massively. Totally. Gotcha. Yeah. Yeah. Cuz you want to do well for them. You want to do well for yourself and you want to tell the story properly. So what's the best way we can do that and I do think the the music and the dancing and all the joyousness is really important to balance out actually quite a difficult stressful story that had a huge impact on people's lives and obviously a lot of the people who were part of that strike are now not alive. So it's also thinking about them as well. But I think actors I anyway bond really well to people knowing what they want. Yeah. And I think I trusted everyone on this process. This was hard because it's in a greenock accent and I'm from Edinburgh. So I'm east coast and you're from Perth. I'm from Perth. So it's quite far from different from us, isn't it? And we had Jean had a lot of accent market coach come on to help with us. Yeah. A lot of my thing was especially for Finley was sort of turning on that sort of west coast. I don't want to call it twang. It's not quite twang is it? It's like a nasly more of a penetrating sound. Whereas the way I speak is quite breathy and that is like that's one of these things that's quite hard. It's also the we're not very glottly. No, but the west coast can be very glottle and particularly this green accent is very punctuated and directed and not that fast either. And I think that's also in the 80s obviously people spoke slower. Well, I'm saying obviously, but maybe the kids might not know. But the reason probably there's so many reasons, but I think actually a huge part of that is because everything is so instant and accessible now and quick. And I think we there is an impatience within our language sometimes now because of that. If you're speaking too fast, the green ladies out there are not going to understand and recognize that as their voice. So, you have to sort of rewind the clock and think about them and what they were like. And that means being slower basically, but then you can't be too slow because then the audience will get bored. So it's like you have to keep the pace. It's a really difficult thing, isn't it? And Finley actually as well to the same extent. I sort of go in with what you think and what you've got from the documentaries and go in with something and then have someone like Paul English from Greenick. He gave us like another working script where he went through every word and went this is what you'd say instead of that if you were from Greenick rather than Glasgow. Yeah. I mean, I went through it with a fine tooth comb and I had to really every single sentence I had to make a choice whether I'm I'm saying a or I'm saying off. Certain words that catch out because you've not made a decision. So, you just have to make a decision otherwise you end up the greenell. The green.

Yeah. So, yeah, we're wanting for a meeting for a meeting. We're wanting for a meeting. So, wanting or wanting. It could be both. you need to make a decision otherwise you end up on stage being like what and it comes out wrong and you're like gh that sounds like I can't do an accent. So you have to just be specific.

I think when you're retelling someone's real life story that has massively impacted them. I think there's a great responsibility and you have to be careful with it and see it as a privilege because they've actually given us the right to to tell it in a different way. So I think it's just about being careful with that responsibility. I've only done it twice I think of people are alive and it is really really moving. I think it helps with just like you need that as an actor, you just need that complete conviction and belief in anything that you're doing. Yeah. And I think the fact that we know that I mean Francis the writer has done her research so incredibly well that everything we say is even if not verbatim from interviews she's done. It's it's true stories and I think that really helps just have belief in whatever you're saying and doing cuz you're like well this happened. Even the mad scenes like with the union boss Mr. Smith when he's you know obviously we exaggerate it a bit but like he puts the whiskey on the table and says what about that and it's like that really happens and that really annoyed Helen like and I love I love knowing that like well it's true it's real so here you go like this is what happened well you met yourself I met myself for the first time Kathy Wallace and that unlocked a huge thing because we'd not met her and she's not really in any of the documentaries or anything I didn't all I had to go on was the text which obviously we knew was very truthful but it was quite funny. The part was quite well I thought there was a lot of humor in it. And then I thought is am I just putting that on to this character because I like to do funny stuff. And then I met her and I was like no she's like 20 times funnier than

what is actually even there. She is a such character and that unlocked a whole big thing for me cuz I thought yeah I I get her now. I can see her. I can visualize her. She's big energy and she's got a really strong connection with her sister, but they obviously fight like cat and dog as well. So, it was like really great to see them in the same space. And I think that really unlocked a lot for me, Kara, because we both get on as actors. We actually get on very well with our siblings. So, we were like, you know, trying to tap into something that doesn't really exist for us. So, that was nice to see that in person to see what they're like and what their dynamic is like. The fact that they're still alive is such a privilege cuz I mean we've spent quite a bit of time with them now, haven't we? And they are really fun people and really beautiful humans. I had a bit of apprehension about meeting them because obviously Finley isn't around anymore as we learn in the play, but he died in 2020. During the process of I think this play being workshopped and researched, I was nervous to meet Helen because I thought I couldn't imagine how she's going to feel about meeting someone who's playing her son. And it's really not long ago. It's really not long ago. But she was just so gracious and lovely about it. A few of the women said things about the boys that were in the factory at the time and they just said they were like, "Well, they were good boys." Yeah, good boys. And I heard that and I went, "Yeah, that is how it's written." And that that must be the way they're just he's just a good boy. I mean, he's so young. So young. So young. Can you imagine being in that situation?

[music]

my sister Maggie because she was doing a lot of the speaking out in public and stuff and how that relationship develops from the the beginning to the end of the the stand in and I think there's yeah I mean I don't know how much of it is Francis's license and how much of it actually happened but there is obviously a lot of love there and I think it's just leaning into that love and that relationship and imagine having to live with your sibling at work basically for 7 months. It's quite an intense thing to do. I lived with my sister in lockdown for a month, a year and a half, and it was brilliant, but you know, it's it's hard. And they're very close in age, 19 and 21. So, I think there probably would have been a little bit of fighting and stuff like that. So, yeah, I think probably the relationship with Maggie is the most important one. And also with Helen and how she sees Helen and how she's inspired by her, guided by her, and how Helen's strength can pick her up. probably maybe around the smoke scene when they try and smoke us out and she's like no anybody who wants to leave fine but I'm going to stay and then Kathy's the first one that goes right I'm staying as well. So I think moments like that then you can really lean into that sort of matriarchal idolization of Helen which to be honest we all feel even as actors I mean when we met her we were all like oh here she is she's such a hero I think these lasses would have re I mean I know they did really look up to Helen when we met Helen and that the lasses when Helen spoke everybody listened and I think that is in the play and I think there's moments where we really do listen to what Helen has to say and then with Maggie Obviously, there's that reconciliation at the end of act two where they she gets dumped and Maggie's like, "You didn't deserve your faroetic curls." And I think that's just like totally encapsulates sisterhood. And I think a lot of these women really relied on each other in this dark time to to come together. And I'm sure it was hard keeping up relationships. And a few women actually left to get married. And that was difficult cuz nobody wanted to leave but they also wanted to try and get jobs and move on with their life. So I think the sisterhood is very [clears throat] important within the play and I think Maggie and Kathy's relationship encapsulates that definitely. For Finley anyway it's about his key relationships are Helen, his mom and Maggie. from the first time, from the first scene, I think he's clearly just sort of in awe of her and he kind of finds even the bits where she does a joke that doesn't land with everyone, he'll he'll do a we laugh cuz he kind of likes it. And even if he doesn't find it funny, he kind of wants to impress her leading up all the way to the end of the play where he just goes, "You know what? I'll ask you." [laughter] But because he's 19 and things aren't that deep, he just gets over it quite quickly. Yeah. and his mom as well. I think it's a different sort of idolization that he'll have for Helen in a way that I think of in a scene like where you and Maggie are trying to convince Helen to speak to Alec, get the get the key. And I always feel a bit of I really want that key, too. But I I don't really want to hound my mommy for I don't really I feel I'm sort of uncomfortable like, "Yeah, we need the key." But I don't

think Finley would be as comfortable being like, "Yes, do this, Helen. Do this, Mom." Cuz he respects her too much. when Finley's sitting with Finley Senior and they're bitching away about about the strike and he's sitting down like that going I just don't know if this is how can we keep doing this and then Helen comes in his mom comes in and he'll sit he sits up I don't know just that was my instinct like he'd set up for his mom set up for his mommy but if he's just having a we'd be like his mom's here so I'll set up [laughter] we things like that

I hope that they take a sense of hope and solidarity and coming togetherness and that you should stand up for your rights at your work and that together with community and safety and a sense of friendship you can achieve things that you might not have thought you could. I feel like in Scotland we kind of do see ourselves as a small small little nation then sometimes we get a bit that's kind of our natural way is to go like oh well if other people think that's the best and I guess that's the way and um maybe we can do something despite what people may tell us because throughout this whole play you've got all these people saying you know the journalist are you sure you're doing this is this militant and constantly Helen really Helen is the spearhead for all this she's going no I know what we'd want I'm ignoring the political groups. I'm ignoring the other people because we know what you want. It's simple what we want. Fairness. And I think it's a lot of people get side and I too you can get sidetracked by people getting in your ear about something when you know something might be wrong or right. So I think people take that away. Also I think um I'd want people to be have had a good night out. Yeah, me too. They've had a good night out. dark times, really difficult times politically and the the wars that are going on. And I think just to have a night out at the theater where you can just, you know, sit in this story that is true, you know, it's hopeful, you know, it's going to end well and just forget your troubles for a bit and just enjoy the music, enjoy the good times. I think that's really cool. And I think it's great that it's a story that is predominantly centers around a lot of women, but I also love the fact that the men in apart from Mr. Smith. The men in the show are also um all brilliant. Yeah. And I think that and they and they had a huge impact on supporting the women. So I think it's good that that's um in terms of gender, I think it's it's a really great sort of love story of unity. I think that's what we want.

CAST | JO & CHIARA

The first person you see on stage is Helen. In the beginning of the play, it's supposed to be some point post them winning kind of thing, maybe looking back on the win and discussing that. But the Helen that you see at first, so I come out and when I acknowledge the audience, I kind of don't necessarily know how to start the story. That Helen is actually Helen in 2026. Now, so my Helen is what we like to call Travels with the harlequin of time. That's [laughter] what we call them in rehearsals.

So she kind of can jump time, so she can be with us with the audience in 2026. She's also with the girls in 1981 as they are kind of all together recalling what happened, and she is Helen in the moments of the action of the play, which is during the strike. So it's quite layered our time frame, but the first time you see Helen, she's in 2026 kinda unsure of how to begin the story of retelling what happened in the 7-month strike.

My character is 19. She had just left school and went straight into this job, but in the very beginning wasn't happy about that. You don't really see that, but we kind of get that from the the text at the beginning. And it's really Helen that gets her into the work, gets her going, you can do this. Cuz I think at the beginning it's quite scary coming straight out of school, doing something you don't really know about and that you're passionate about. And one of the lines is the reason that she got the job is cuz her sister already worked there. So it's just by chance that she's got the job for that, and that's actually a lucky thing. So we meet her at the beginning hating it, but then we don't get to see this, but from the text because of Helen's help, she begins to love it, and she sees this as a real family kind of like occupation and has like really great relationships with all the women, so that's where we see her.

Even if I get a self-tape for a telly job or whatever, I write a character biog, even if I don't know anything about the character and it comes from drama school. It was something that we did once for something in drama school and I just always really loved it. Obviously with Helen, you could do that very easily cause she's a real person, she still exists and she's real. So, pre-the audition, I had watched the RIG arts thing and got information about the factory and the workers. And then I did a little bit of Googling about Helen and because the majority of what I was doing in the audition was at the age that she is in the sit-in, which is 44, I kind of wrote like a loose biog round about that from the play and you know that she had a husband called Finlay, she had another son called Finlay. But it's something for me, it gives me a little bit of a world. Even if the world isn't the correct one, you can learn what the real one is as you go along. And then if there's context or stuff that I don't necessarily know an awful lot about, I'll go through it. So, my knowledge of Thatcher's free market is limited because I was like two at the time or whatever, but my knowledge on the Brixton riots is slightly more, but I still went in and kind of had a look at things that contextualize the play as opposed rather than feed the character's information.

Yeah.

There's not huge amounts of footage of Helen talking to the press, but there is a couple of kind of famous clips where she's talking. But I wasn't coming in to do an impersonation of Helen, I was coming in to play a representation of her, it has to be me playing her within the context of this play, which is different to what her real life was like in 1981 or during that sit-in. It's Francis's version of her world. She has the Harlequin of Time, she is traveling, she's really 89 at the beginning and the end, but she's 44 during it. So, for me, I'd watched that documentary cause it's it's really good and it's really helpful to contextualise, but then after that I thought, "I'm not going to watch it again because I could get easily drawn into the trap of trying to become Helen rather than trying to represent her theatrically, which I think works better. But to delve too much, I think for me would have become

unhelpful.

I think what kind of happens for me, which I really like, is you kind of start just adopting things to that time, like because it's amazing with all this music in it. You do end up just starting listening to that music a bit more, and you get a bit more influence cause you're spending so much time with that. Or just the jokes and the fun in it. We've been really lucky like everyone genuinely has gotten so well, and I think that's makes such a difference when you're doing something like this, and it's a real ensemble feel. because Francis, in a really great way, will use 20 words when she could have used eight. But what that gives you is more subtext of why they're saying that much vocabulary than cutting to it. And that can be because they're trying to find the right way to say it, they're trying to work through the the memory of it, or for whatever reason. So her work is so layered that you always find an emotive subtext of why she's written it in that way. Now in in this place, the way that she's written some of the vocabulary is because it's exactly the way that the women said it to her when they interviewed her. So she wants to keep it exactly that way. So sometimes there'll be turn of phrases that we would never use that probably now in Greenock or that area, they would never use them either, but in 1981 they did. So there'll be like sentences that you're like that take you forever to learn cause you're like, I really want to put that anyway at the beginning rather than at the end, or I want to say taught instead of learn. I find a lot of that feed the emotion of the subtext. So you're hiding that or it's you can't quite bring yourself to say it, or you're finding a way through it, and that is incredibly helpful. And a lot of what Helen says is contextualizing the experience for the audience. It's explaining what the union was, why they're there, who VF Corporation is, thatcherism, why there's a high value of a pound. All of that could be very dry, but because she puts it into Helen's mouth, and Helen explains it in a kind of layman terms of how she understands it it makes it easier for the audience as well. And I think just as well she writes exactly the way that the women said things so there might not be a full stop or a comma for a really long time. So it's like learning that's hard cause you're going like okay like take a breath at this bit. Like there's a part I think when we had that final scene in act one there's a huge bit for you that I go she's not taking a breath in such a long time but it does really help it cause she's angry at me at that time and then it makes me go she's not taking a breath because she's actually really angry but that's the joy of the way that Francis has written it. And another amazing thing that we had was that we actually were rehearsing on the set which was amazing cause you're then getting a feel for the actual props that you're going to use and things and cause the music is such a big part of it as well actually having a microphone to sing with not a water bottle. Or things like that you were kind of getting the world straight away. The process probably for me was probably entirely different from everybody else because I don't play an instrument so I'm not part of the band and that was really specific within Francis's writing Helen never became part of that world because she is the connection between the audience and her and the the music is something else almost. I mean I had quite a lot of discussion at the beginning about what that connection to the music is cause this isn't like a musical cause it's a play with music. The music here sets the context of pieces is that it's the time cause every single song is from 1981 and it's only from 1981 from January until the end of the strike as well not past the strike so it's really specific. So it sets the context it comes into scenes and out of scenes as well. So there's a really fine balance of being able to find what your connection to the songs are when you're in a scene like working all of that out was all quite tricky and layered. So we had Jean Sangster was our voice coach. So she came in to work with us. The Greenockian or accent from the kind of Inverclyde area isn't massively different from Glasgow, but the thing that kind of defines it is the pace. It's not as fast as a Glaswegian accent. It's not as wide on the vowels. I had watched Helen and she's her mouth always seemed to be kind of in a straight-forward kind of position, whereas I'm very wide when I talk. So, it was finding that. I always imagine her like she's got a kind of like steel like inners, which kind of gives her a kind of element of grounding in her voice that I don't naturally have cause I'm really high up here most of the time and it kind of helped to really, Jean and I talked a lot about this kind of push to stay calm, but to get yourself across, which kind of helps to anchor all your kind of apparatus that helps to make your voice work. So, it certainly helped me to kind of speak in an an area that I don't, which helps me feel more like Helen. For me, the only time I try and slip into something that I think is more elderly is a line she says

to Finlay when she says, "I'm old, son. I'm 89." And that's more about the vocabulary of old and just I try and put a little crack in my voice to make it feel like she in that little tiny section is older. I'm not made up to look 89 nor am I 89. So, there was a kind of thought at the beginning of when I come on at the beginning should the pace of her movement feel slower and should it feel like she's an older person, but and and also it's a moment where she's sitting by herself. I kind of in my head visualize that she's slightly older in that moment. So, she's not quite as upright in her stature and stuff like that. But, that's the only time I kind of dip into that elderly thing and the vocal quality that we work with with Jean on that helps to get into that wee just wee second. It was actually really interesting because we spoke loads with Jean and she was making the point that they wouldn't have the same like media that we have right now where we can just watch American things or if we could see things from all over the world. Actually from that, they wouldn't have that influence yet, which was quite interesting. So, when she said that, that kind of like made me click a wee bit more of like, "Oh, right. Okay, that's more of the time as well and why they speak slower." And also, I think that they really wanted to get across the message that they were saying. So, there is parts that are really important. So, for example, for me, I've got that big speech. And the beginning feelings of nervousness, and there's a bit of like rattling through a couple of jokes just to try and like calm herself down. But then, as time goes on, she's actually been given this amazing opportunity to speak in front of a crowd. So, you can't speed that up. You can't naturally do what you might think the way to get something across. So, that's been like a really nice bit for me that actually just feel like I can breathe through when I'm on stage. And that's quite a lot of power when you do that. When you do have a moment on stage and you are just going, "Right, yeah, I think what was really nice was having that still feeling. I don't really have that through the play cause I'm 19 and I'm young and a lot of my lines are a lot more like "Excitement, let's get this ready." Or like, "I'm angry at this point." So, I'm just, you know, like not sure what have I'm feeling. Jemima did a really good job of even in the audition, I remember we kind of worked on it together. And it was like, "You're asking for money from people. You're asking for support from people. It's not just an old email that we'd send. You're actually standing on a stage going, 'If you've got any money you can spare to give us.' And that's a wee girl asking a big crowd and a big crowd of, you know, academic kind of people to do that. Nervousness, but then there's power in it. So, I think that's what's really fun. So, that first one of going, "If there's any money you can spare." Then the next one's going, "No, no, no, I've kind of got a bit of support now if you've got support." Then to go and "Oh, no, I'm enjoying this now." Or "When am I Now I'm at a rally. Now I'm at this thing." And then we hear a bit of that. When we're speaking and I mean, I'm jumping ahead now, but when she's speaking to Helen and she's going, "Think of everything that you've done. You've been invited to Sweden. You've been invited to America. Who Who knows where else we're going to go?" Then you get the buzz for it. So, I think it's fun seeing her at the beginning of that speech going, "This is the first time she's doing it but by the end of it she's like that almost as if she's like a kind of like personality on stage getting people on her side. So, yeah it's fun we kind of see like a whole journey in that speech which is really fun to do from the very beginning and then it's really nice cause it's almost like a kind of like better than a her whole character throughout the whole show in that one speech.

Mine's is with Cathie who is my sister who's played by Hannah Jarrett Scott who we see them in that first bit of the scene but it's just a lot of information about them in the factory and all the jokes that they would have in front of everyone else that worked there. But then the really beautiful scene at the end which was also actually part of the audition where Maggie's matured and her sister's actually really proud of her and we actually got to speak to the real Cathie and Maggie about that and Cathie was saying I couldn't believe when I saw her on the TV doing that and speaking in front of all those people and I think that has really influenced that scene now because it's really emotional to think about that from the journey that they both went on. I also have a great relationship with Helen. I think Maggie's just obsessed with Helen. I think she just thinks she's everything she kind of wants to be. She doesn't know that in the beginning but as time goes on she just wants her approval the whole time and she doesn't know how to get it cause it's that young way of going I'll try this tactic and I'll try this tactic then getting frustrated when Helen can't see that she's actually trying to help but she's

going no you're actually making things worse. So, we go on a real journey with them especially at the end of act one where I think I kind of lose it and decide to do something wrong which ultimately loses Helen's trust but then at the end seeing them really come together and I think she's just always always searching for her approval always really wanting to impress her. I think there's something really lovely in that cause I think that can work in work spaces especially if you've just left school so young and you found yourself here especially at the beginning if she's going I don't even want to be here and someone's taken a real interest in you. I think that we've all maybe had a person like that in our life that's gone, "No, you can do this. You can do this." And it may not be vocalized and go, "Oh, thanks so much for that in the moment." But I think that's the whole end of the play. She actually goes without you having have done any of this. Yeah, I think obviously one of the biggest relationships Helen has is with Maggie. Francis was like, you know, there had to be an adversity for for Helen and and Maggie is that. She's the other woman Cathie does rotas. Her daughter Mary cooked and cleaned, you know. Catherine Roberts went out and got all the money and was positive kind of force for good. Whereas she was the bane of her life, you know. She was the one that was the thorn in her side. So, Francis was like, "It had to be that because, you know, every good story has to have, you know, who you're fighting against." There is not a big shouting match between them. There's not Helen kind of, you know, getting her into trouble all the time or whatever. It's just a rising her being bored, not having enough to do, wanting to prove herself, but doing it all the wrong ways. And as the pressure mounts on Helen, that comes to, you know, a a kind of point where the whole thing kind of blows up slightly for them both. But you then get the the rebuild of that relationship towards the end. So, it is a kind of really important one. Um and also I've got a relationship with Finley, who's my son in the play was Helen's son in real life. And he was in the factory in the strike. And that relationship is really important because it helps her to highlight that nobody gets special treatment in that factory. There's a moment where he wants to sneak out for a really good reason to go to college cause he's doing a college course about factory management at the same time. And Helen won't let anybody leave and that includes her son, even though she knows that he wants to leave for a good reason, not to go to the pub or not to sneak out and have a cigarette. So, it kind of shows Helen's kind of black and whiteness and her fairness. It's the same with the same with Jimmy is another really important relationship. They only have one scene really together, but that scene is when she discovers that he's hit the bottle because he has a drink problem and that she has to dismiss him. But this isn't like speaking to Maggie who's a younger girl, this is Jimmy who's the same age as her. They've both been working in the factory together. Helen doesn't in the factory have any superiority, she's not a supervisor, she's not a boss in any in any way, she's just the shop steward and when the strike is on, it's up to her to make sure that nobody gives any excuse for them to be thrown out of there. So that scene is is for me a really kind of emotional one where Helen kind of has to really tap in and be like, I can't be emotional about Jimmy because he is my peer, because he's somebody I've worked with for 20 years, because he's somebody that I care for, actually he has to go to save the the strike, he can't be here.

The moment when Maggie says we're a family, we've got to fight to save our jobs and they're waiting for Helen to make the decision whether they're going to actually barricade themselves in or or not. It's kind of changed the way that I've played that between rehearsals and now it feels like at the beginning I was like, oh god, I'm being kind of persuaded by them to do this thing but now knowing Helen having met her like, Helen can't be persuaded to do anything. I now play that moment as more of a I just need to work out if it is the best thing to do and actually by the time that they've all said to her, we are a family, like are you going to do are you going to do what is your response going to be that she's gone, actually for all these people standing in front of me and the other 240 that I imagine, this is the only way to try and save their jobs. So so that is an incredibly important moment. There's a moment with Finlay senior played by Hannah Jarrett Scott where, you know, they're months into the strike by now and the track basically get her to capitulate and give it up and that she's sent a electricity bill for the factory for a for a charge of 4,000 pounds and there's a moment where in Finlay senior says to this could be your way out because Helen has just told them I can't call an end on it. That's not in my nature. Basically, it's not who I am. And he says this could be your get out and he

leaves her to think on that moment. And I think in that moment there is a whether this is truthful to the real Helen or not, but for the for purposes of our play, in that moment I think she's tired. It's it's the beginning of the second act. They've been at it for months. There's a lot of unrest within British society at that time. I think at that point for me in the play, she's like, actually this could be a way to end all this. And [snorts] we could just get out and walk away and maybe we won't get another job, but that might be better. In that moment where she's tired, and then quickly off the back of that, I think the third moment is when the Americans try to smoke them out, she changes her mind and she goes, "No, no, I'm angry now." And she steps up and ultimately they go on to have some kind of win. There's a character called Catherine Robertson that always gets brought up to who we don't see who is my best friend and we've got to meet Catherine Robertson, which is amazing. But she kind of gets brought up a a loads of times during the play. The first time it kind of like has a bit more meaning to it is during Girls on Film and there's a bit where Helen's asked, "Who have you got going out and speaking for you?" And Catherine Robertson was the first one that she picked. So when I kind of like get back to the audience, it's starting to like plant a seed that like there's a bit jealousy there, that I've been having the best time of my life up until this point. I'm just loving the excitement and all the like drama and chaos that's coming with what's going on. But because I'm wanting to start to be a bit more useful, I'm wanting to have a bit more saying what things are doing. I think that's the first seed that where we go, "Okay, she's kind of got jealousy of someone." And then I think the second time that we then bring that up is when Jimmy then goes and there's this big explosion where she brings up Catherine and goes, "Why do you never ask me to go out? Why is it her?" And I I that's the thing she's been waiting for her chance this whole time. And then I think what's nice is then when we get to the speech, we see her get that chance. So, I think there's loads of moments we kind of see where Maggie can mature and make make her own decisions. But yeah, I think for me, that first Catherine Robertson getting the the opportunity to go speak kind of like start something in her. The explosion about Catherine asking Helen why that can't be her cause she can't understand herself. And then the chance to actually do it and come back to the factory and then get to speak's three moments for me.

Helen says at the end, "It wasn't like when when they got the factory back, everything went back to normal. You went on to do another job and she actually withheld from the women that she was helping that she was part of this cause she didn't want to scare them." My character ends up going to Jersey cause I couldn't get work in Greenock, which is pretty mad now cause you think like there's there's a play about how amazing these women were. So, I think just like doing them justice, teaching them about it. I think knowing about the world at that time, I think it was really scary, which is something that we can all still sympathize with. And the fact that there was a lot going on at that time, these women stood up for what they believed to be was right. And for the length of time that they did, so I think the fact that they did it for 7 months is pretty mad. It's it's a true inspiration. I think this play shows that you can protest and stand up against something and do it in a positive way with, you know, Jimmy Reid was the famous one, they'll be no obeying, no swearing, and no fighting because the eyes of the world are watching. Helen has something similar where she says, "Jimmy, you have to go because when the redundancies are are gone, all eyes on us. We have to behave." There's a moment with her at the end with the police man from Greenock and he says, "If you had done anything wrong, we would have come down on you. You didn't do anything wrong. What you did was you fought for your jobs. We live in a world just now where we should probably be fighting for a lot of things and together, collectively, people can make change. And it's important not to forget that. And I hope that if anybody watching this goes, "Oh, actually, I was thinking of doing this or doing that or getting a group together or, you know, whatever it is that they feel passionate about." They may not be saving their jobs, but it could be something else that they feel committed about that actually people do change things. And we need to not forget that, that it's not just the operational ones that change stuff. It's normal working people can change stuff as well.

DESIGNER | JESS WORRALL

As a designer, I guess my process is pretty much the same on on most pieces. It always comes from uh the script and the director. So, it's a combination of talking to the director, talking about the parameters of the piece, of the ambition of the piece, the sort of scale of it, the budget, and then it's reading the script and responding to that. And what I often do is I read the script without thinking about the practicalities of what it is I'm trying to kind of create, to the world I'm going to try and create. I just respond to it as a a piece of text, and it can evoke kind of colors or place or texture or lots of things. And then I go back into it with more kind of detail.

And then the next stage of the process is kind of I do mood boards a lot of time. I always have a Pinterest page that I make for every project that I do. I share that with the director, lots of conversations with the directors going, "Are these colors right? Is this kind of place right? Is this is what we're thinking of? Is this world correct? Is this the right direction to kind of go in?" And then once we've kind of I guess got a kind of idea of the kind of visual language, then I work in model form. So, I will make a scale model of the design, which is using a 1:25 scale. And that means everything that you as a viewer then see on stage, I will have made in model form. And there's always thing of if it works in a model, it'll work on stage. And then we go through that.

There's a white card version of it where it's all the elements, but it's not finished, and then it gets costed. In terms of from white card, normally actually there's three cuz you get concept, which is kind of really talking about the kind of I guess the ballpark of the whole thing, of these are the elements I'd like to explore, these are the practicalities of those elements, of how I think they might, you know, I might want some walls, I might want a nice shiny floor, you know, the visual kind of elements of things, and whether that's feasible to do. And then the white card, yeah, like I say, is all the elements there, but not necessarily finished, so they can cost it.

If there's any problem with the costing, like it doesn't work within budget, then I have to then go back to it and look at the elements to see where I can trim it back, so it's within budget. Or if there's any logistics in terms of it won't fit into if it's a tour, like stand and deliver, it has to fit in lots of different venues. It's always juggling the creative and the practical. And then there's the final model where you've got all the elements there. And then of course you've got costume drawings and props and all that thing as well. In terms of how we've set it in the kind of sort of working men's kind of club, like social club, that came out of a conversation that Jemima and I had about what sort of world to place it in, that not wanting to place it in the factory itself, because this is women looking back, I guess, you know, they're telling the story of what happened to them, their real story of this particular point in their history. But also because it's a play with songs, there's this very practical sense that we needed something that would allow the music to seem real. And so the design had to kind of include that, and you couldn't really set up a band in a factory. I think that might look slightly odd.

So it felt that the kind of working men's club or sort of social working women's club, perhaps, um, social club was the right kind of place for it. It was a place where I think stories are told, where people naturally tell stories, where people go to kind of look after each other, to support each other, where they feel safe, where that community sort of feel safe. And also it's where music and celebration kind of happen. So it felt like it was the kind of perfect place to sort of set this story. I used to go to like folk clubs and stuff with my dad when I was young, so I kind of have that kind of, uh, aesthetic sort of in my head. And also like our local pub and stuff, and, yeah, kind of just where I grew up in in Yorkshire. But I did a lot of research into kind of pictures of, you know, working men's clubs,

social clubs, kind of miners clubs. And also there was some really amazing footage of some of the women in one of the interviews, and they were in the social club in Greenock, and I think it's probably where they go and kind of hang out. So, that was really great because it kind of affirms that it was the right sort of place to set it. So, one of the things that I really like in the set is there's a gray kind of lino sort of floor that almost looks like it's a social club floor, but it's actually based on the actual floor in the factory.

I mean, I've only seen black and white of it, but it was gray, but it looked like it had these kind of red sort of squares on it. And then I've since found out there were some little red and black squares on it, which is perfect cuz that's the kind of color palette for the piece.

Um so, it was a really nice kind of serendipitous sort of moment of kind of combining the factory, the reality of the factory, but also the kind of the the social club, as well. I think for me, in terms of when I'm designing something and why I think about it as a playground is once I've designed it, it's like you kind of hand it over to the rehearsal room, and it's handed over to the director and the actors. And then, through the rehearsal period, they kind of take possession of it, and it becomes theirs. And it's their world. It's not really anything to do with me anymore. So, I think that's what I think about that and they play in it, and they find things out, and then things get added or taken away or whatever. So, and those are things that I can never imagine. So, the way that they kind of devise, you know, sort of movement pieces, where they'll use an object a certain way, or suddenly, you know, they animate a space, and they make a space kind of live. Um and I think that's what I mean by playground, that they play in it.

In terms of this design, because it's going to Maybe it's nine venues, something like that, and they differ in terms of like the size of the actual stage area, and also it has to be a one-day get-in, so they have to be able to put the show up, arrive in the morning, put the show up, and then perform in the evening. So, that means you have to be really creative, I think, about the elements that you use. I think if I designed it maybe for one place, it might have had like solid walls on it, but that's where the curtains came from because it's a way of actually adding structure and and delineating the space, but it not being really heavy to kind of bring in. And also, yeah, it kind of breaks down into elements sort of more quickly. So, that's a practical kind of creative solution, I guess.

Um but I really like it because it's a kind of, it gives it a kind of feminine sort of like feel. It gives it much kind of softer feel. So, it's, it's sometimes out of that kind of idea of having a practical problem, you get a creative solution that you wouldn't have found anyway. So, the green book is a way of trying to basically reuse and recycle um as much material as possible. So, you're lowering the carbon footprint of a show because there's obviously, when you're kind of designing something, if you're buying wood, you're buying materials all the time, that has a kind of an impact, an ecological kind of impact, sort of weather. So, it's trying to kind of lower that. And also, there isn't a huge amount of stuff that just gets thrown away at the end of it. I always talk to the head of production at the theater company I'm working with and say, "What have you got that I could use?" And it's good to do that quite an early stage in the design process. So, you'd look at what they've got and see, "Can I use that in the design process? Will that lead the design a certain way because I can use that?" We have tried to use like the decking. I knew that could be like a stock kind of 8 by 4 sort of rostra . So, we knew that they had that. And then working with the set builders once I designed it was to try and use kind of material that they had.

And this is probably my most favorite kind of part of the design that with Pretty Scenic, who are these amazing like set builders, they had in the store the wood paneling. And it had come from one of the set builders' wives' grandmothers' house that they'd stripped out. And they'd had it in their store like just in their stock for years waiting for the right project to use it on and this was it. And literally it's the most beautiful texture. Like it as soon as you see that wood you go, 'I know where I am.' You are right back there. It's it's just I love that.

I think of set and costume, props - all of it - as part of the same thing. It's all part of the visual world. It's all part of the visual language. It's all part of telling a story and it's all part of what the audience see and which helps them relate to the story that they're seeing. To me it's all kind of integrated. So I develop them at the same time. For this piece because it's set in 1981, it's very specific and also because it's about real people and you can see footage of them. So I looked as much sort of footage and stuff or photographs that I could find actually of them and I also looked at sort of you know, footage from the time of other marches or protests or just photographers from that time as well. Because I think it's really important that when you think of kind of 1981 and what or when we think of the 80s, we kind of think, oh you know, Top of the Pops and New Romantics all of that sort of thing. But that's a very tiny tiny part of it.

For a working class kind of population, they wouldn't be dressed in the height of fashion. Even though we've got these amazing like pop songs in it. These are working women and boy. And so I for me knowing that era and knowing my family at that time, we were still at like it was the late 70s. You know, so there's a hybrid sort of to it. And I think the most important thing was to kind of make it just look ordinary. And I don't mean that in a derogatory way. I mean just for it to look real.

That these are real people and I hope that people will go, oh my god, I used to wear that. That they have that kind of recognition sort of to it. And I know that when some of the women who came in to see a part of it, they looked at the work coats that we got and they went, 'it's just the same!' So I love that kind of to get that detail right for them to kind of recognize that and to see that we're honoring that detail. That's a joy. Detail is really really important to me and getting that detail because I think the detail is the thing that that people will see and go 'they've actually looked'. So the badges, I saw it was a really kind of grainy footage but you could see what the badge was. So I've recreated the graphic of the badge which is save our jobs.

There's going to be some posters and things there that are from the time as well trying to replicate near as we can what was actually in the factory. So it places it very much in that way. And it's interesting because obviously, you know, because the actors are playing those people but they're still actors so they're not replicating those people. It's a kind of, you know, it's the spirit of those people. It's making the actors feel secure in what they're wearing but also honoring the spirit and the ethos of of the actual real life people. So there's kind of like two truths if that makes sense. I think just generally in terms of like when you're doing research, it's really important if you're reading a text not to just go 'oh, it's 1981 I only look at 1981.' You have to look at the class, the kind of structures, the social kind of conditions of that place and then think about how that relates to your own life and go 'oh, I'm not the height of fashion' so what I'm wearing could be from you know, five or six years ago and that's that makes it more human and more real.

In terms of when I'm doing a design process, the initial relationship is always with the director and it's talking with them about obviously, you know, how the design is going to develop and what they want and what kind of helps them actually direct the show. And then the other kind of key people are all the backstage people. So well, obviously producers and budget because that's quite important to not spend too much. Yeah, it's really to do with all the backstage people. So it's to do with wardrobe costume and then set builders, then the lighting designer, then the sound designer, then the stage management who liaise with about all the props and stuff. So, it's kind of whole team of people that literally bring the design to life. I mean, not all designers work the same, but for me it's like I just think that it's it's a collaborative art form. I mean, it literally is a collaborative art form. And I don't think one element is more important than another sort of within it. So, it's really important to have those conversations with people. And if something you're doing is impacting what they're doing, then you need to talk about it and you need to try and find a way of that not impacting what they're doing. So, for me I had a conversation with Kevin quite early on about speakers, about where they were going, kind of where they could go, could they be integrated into the language of the space,

and the same with the lighting. So, you see there's a bar at the front of the over the stage that's got lights on it and that was in the design very very early. And that would be a conversation with Emma as well about what sort of the lights were. We had conversations about whether those lights needed to be period lights, like more kind of like um old sort of '80s lights or 1970s sort of lights. And so, there's a sense of actually like the way the speakers look within the space, the actual set itself, and the lights look they're period, but out with of that within the kind of black around it, they're more modern. So, that was a conversation that we had with them very early on, which is it's really great to have those kind of conversations.

So, the set basically is a room in a working men's club or a social club or I guess almost a pub as well. It's a hybrid of various places. And there is a gray floor, tiled floor. There is a little raised stage, like a little sort of stage which is red carpeted, and that's got the drum kit, um all the musical instruments, a lot of musical instruments sort of laid out on it. And the walls are basically a combination of some wood paneling, sort of '70s wood paneling, and some curtains, curtains sort of side with a kind of pelmet round the top that curtains kind of hang down from. And then at the back of the stage there were red curtains again. So, there's a quite a predominance of red. I mean, I love red, but also it's a socialist color. So, and if you go to a lot of those working men's kind of clubs or sort of social clubs, they are red and they're red for a reason. It's because they're labor and they're social. Whereas, if you go to conservative club, that would be blue. So, I wanted it to kind of reflect politics, I think, of the time. And then as part of the action, the curtains open and behind that is a black and white backdrop of Greenock Harbor. And it's got the James Watt crane in there, as well. And I think that's the kind of thing of because we're hearing this story sort of in the future and we're going back to the past. So, I wanted to have that sort of almost nostalgia kind of about it, about almost looking through an album or something with it. And it's also based on the Star Bar in Glasgow, which is very red and black and white sort of and wood paneling in it. But behind the bar they have a kind of black and white picture of old Glasgow. And I love that those kind of bars have that there. It's a reflection of its own history, I guess. I just hope they realize how amazing both the actors are, but also the women whose story this is based on. I really hope they understand how important, especially in this day and age, collective action is and the power of that and to not give up your right to to be able to protest.

LIGHTING DESIGNER | EMMA JONES

I think the lighting design has different roles during the process of lighting design. Choosing the lighting units, the positions, you're looking at the set and then later on in the rehearsal process, you start pinpointing where the cues go and you work with the director, maybe with the sound designer and the DSM to put those cues into the book. A DSM on a project is short for deputy stage manager. And that person is in the room. They're in rehearsals throughout the rehearsal process. And then once it gets to stage, they sit with the book, which is essentially a copy of the script. And in that, I have given them cue numbers. They've got cue numbers that they call verbally to the lighting operator so that the cues that I've plotted go in the right place. And then you get into the plotting session where you actually make the cues happen on the stage in front of you and then you sit and watch that hopefully happen in front of your eyes and everything's fine and dandy in the final version

So I think early days it's chatting with Jemima the director, Jess Worrell who's doing sets, that's an early conversation as well and Craig Fleming the production manager. Those are the sort of early conversations that you have. And then as you kind of get further down the line, you start working with in this case NTS, the head of lighting there, Derek, and you suddenly there's a team around you, which is brilliant. So then I start to get a programmer who's Fee Dalglish, who I've worked with a lot before, and you get all this support that comes in around you. So I guess we're talking about there's a period that the show is set in, which it is 1981. We're talking about what the set is. Any sort of early stage conversations might be around practical lighting. It might be around period lighting. It might be around um practical lights on the set like a fire exit sign for example. That was part of Jess's set. So immediately like right does that need to light up? Is it a working thing? Jess had lights on a bar like a theatrical bar almost in the set. So, we've talked a lot about what those lights would be, what they would be in 1981, what they'd be today. Those sort of early questions around or conversations around what we're trying to say with the lighting, which is weird because talking about lighting is hard always people it when you talk about lighting, I think everybody imagines something different. And so my job is to try and make sure that everybody in the creative team is imagining what I am imagining which is really hard I think until you get onto the stage. The other key relationship actually is with the DSM who's Brian who I've also worked with before. So it's a really nice team for me that I know a lot of the people that I've worked with before.

I didn't know anything about the story before I was involved in the project and then sort of got the title. The title was sent to me which wasn't Stand and Deliver at that stage. It was called Lee Jeans Lassies back then and so I did a bit of googling and I was like oh wow that's an amazing that sounds like an amazing story. It must be the story of the women in the greenock factory. Uh so I did a little bit of research and then obviously got the script and then learned a lot more about the story. But yeah I had no idea about this story before I became involved in the project. Maybe there was a design or an early design, a white card we call it. And at that stage, you can start to visualise what you need to light the show, how big the set is, what the playing space is. You start to learn if the show is touring, this one is. That's a massive consideration for lighting because you have to understand how quickly the crew that tour the show can assemble all the lights, the set, everything that they need to do, whether the show goes up in one day or not. The way we refer to it is like whether it's a one day get

in or not or whether you're in and up in one day. This show is in some of the venues and the venues are vastly different in terms of size and facility. So that's something that I had to consider really early on. Maybe in about January I think I met up with Jemima and Jess and we talked through the set as it was at that stage and where we wanted to put in some practical lighting, some lighting that was sort of inherently built into the set that you actually can't see. You can see the light obviously, but you can't see the lighting source. Again, we talked about there's a mirror ball in the show. So, we talked about that and its use in the show. And I looked a bit more now at the colors of the the carpet, the colors of the walls. Sort of starting to think about what that set might look like lit. Then probably nothing happens for a little bit longer until you get the final model and then you can really start to think about positions of lights and how you will build your lighting rig. The fact that this show is touring meant that we decided early on with the team at NTS that we would try and use as many booms, bits of equipment that we could tour. We weren't relying on the venue rigging positions, for example, the bars overhead or any booms or any side positions. We were what we were trying to do because it's a very short get in. We were trying to make sure that for Fee, who's relighting the show, that it was easier for her if everything is as constant as it can be. So maybe that was a decision we made in February that we were going to go for booms rather than overhead lighting. Talk that through with Jemima and Jess and everybody was happy with that. As I say, nobody really understands what that means at that stage, I don't think, apart from me and the lighting team. Because this show is touring, we decided to hire in all the equipment. So there has to be a hire list of equipment that goes to companies, various companies, and then you get all the costs back in to see whether you can actually afford to do what you want to do or not. Um, so that probably happens around 2 or 3 months before the show gets to the stage. Once you've decided on that and everybody's happy and you've agreed it, you can then start to build your rig and actually where the lights are going to go. Then I get into rehearsals maybe two or 3 weeks in. I don't go in the early days. They're not really up on their feet. They're reading. They're doing a lot of text work. It's with this show. They're doing a lot of music calls. They're doing some choreography. So really until they're kind of running scenes or doing stuff that's a bit more movement based or certainly using the set more, which they had in rehearsals for this piece, which was really great. Actually, the set was built at Rockvilla. So, I have to draw a lighting plan. And that lighting plan details all of the lights that I'm using, where I'm putting them, at what height they're going, what number, because lights have channel numbers. And I work with the same sort of format of lighting numbers. So, I know, for example, that if there's lights on the floor on the stage, they've got a certain number bank. Lights coming from front of house that are lighting above the audience and down into the front of the stage have a different set of numbers. And I always keep those the same so that I can recall those numbers quickly when I'm plotting. I've hopefully seen a run in the rehearsal room. I've noted down where all my cues are going. I've probably given those to Brian the DSM by that stage. And then I start working with the programmer in the theatre. The programmer, lighting programmer has had some time familiarising themselves. Maybe there's some units, some moving lights that maybe she's not used before, maybe I've not used them before. Usually it's about availability or cost. So we've kind of spent some time looking at what the lights do in the theatre and suddenly now everybody's on the same page because they can actually see what's been going on in my head for the last 3 months, I suppose. We start plotting and that is basically Fee sitting at the lighting console, me sitting next to her. I've got my cues in front of me and we're starting looking at building states with different lights, programming them into the desk cause once they're programmed into the desk, then they stay like that. And then we move into tech and tech so hopefully you've got a bit of plotting done. We have done on this show. You can then put people into those places because you've been kind of plotting to a bare stage which is quite hard. You've been plotting perhaps with no furniture. There's a lot of furniture in this show. Um you've been plotting with no musical instruments. There's a lot of musical instruments in this show. So it's just a bare stage. So, as soon as you put people in there and you put shiny drum kits and you put chairs and tables and things that block the lights that you've put in low, you're you're looking at the tech, refining what you've done in the plotting sessions, moving cues. Nothing is set really until the show is opened on the press night. So, you've got a tech week, hopefully a few tech sessions to get that right. Then you'll have a dress rehearsal, maybe two dress rehearsals where you'll actually see it run.

And for a lighting designer, the dress rehearsals are really important because, well for everybody, but for a lighting designer, you've only seen things in small sections up until that point. And you need to see how things flow together. You need to see the scene changes, if there are any. You need to see how those transitions go, especially with this show, from sort of the musical numbers into the text and into the kind of more static everyday lighting because the musical numbers are lit quite differently in a kind of more musical rock and roll-y kind of way. So, the dress rehearsals inform you so much. You then have very little time to do anything. Uh, everybody's fighting for that time. You know, somebody might want to be doing sound or the set might need a different colour paint or whatever. So you everybody's working really focused in on what they need to be doing in that stage. Then you get to preview which is great. You get to see what the audience think. You get to see how the lighting might be blinding some of the audience that you haven't realised because you haven't had an audience there until that point and then you get to press night and then you can relax.

The difficulties actually are actually just the proximity of the lights to the set. There's not much space, physical space around the walls and the back. So, I had rigged some booms backstage to cross light the back of the stage. There's a curtain which opens at one point in the show and I'd rigged some lights but we couldn't have them. We got we knew that really early on because once I got into rehearsals there's just no space. that the actors are doing so much. It's a crossover. They need to be changing back there. They need to be changing musical instruments or grabbing props or whatever. So, that was a difficulty of actually finding positions that I could put lights in that then didn't get the lighting shots. Even though they're moving lights, they they've only got so much of a pathway that they can see. And because of the way that the the lights had to sit in relation to the set, that was quite a difficulty to make sure that the lights could do what I needed them to do around the the rigid walls of the set.

We decided early on that we were going to use booms rather than the in-house bars, which I've said already. However, once I drew the plan, we realised that because of the way that the two doorways in the back of the set, there's a back wall and then the doorways cut in. because of getting booms in there, but they're also entrances because they're doorways. We couldn't get a boom in there actually and get the lights in the right place. So, we backed up on that original idea. We decided to use a overhead bar from the theater in every venue. That makes it slightly trickier for Fee when she's touring cause that means that there's moving lights on that bar and their position will change depending on how high or where the bar sits in relation to the set. So you'll see a bar overhead that's quite high up. That's maybe at 5 mtrs. The set's about three. So a boom is often sits to the side of the stage or yeah or to the back of the stage and it's a freestanding structure which holds lights. So it means that you can have lights really low down or a good height sort of like face light can come in straight at the right height. And on this show we've got four booms, two per side, two either side of the stage. The rest of the lighting you'll see really clearly because it's very much framing the set sitting on trusses and booms that are kind of hopefully easy to tour, you will see a bar of light that's kind of part of the set of the working man's club where we are and that has got six lights on it and Jess actually drew that in the original design. So I've just kind of copied that and it was my decision as to which lights we used. There's a mirror ball which you can see and that's constant through the show. That's part of the working man's club aesthetic as well. There's an exit sign, a working exit sign, like a fire exit that lights up. And we've got curtains on the sides of sides of the set and on the back of the set. And they've got lights above them that light directly down just to give those a bit of life and a bit of color. They're red curtains, so we're finding what colors work best on them. We've got some mostly moving lights, mostly color changing lights, everything apart from two lights that we've got in this rig

are LED lights. Uh that makes it easier uh in terms of power distribution and all that kind of stuff. Um we've got lights that aren't from 1981 and actually the lights that we've got on the bar that are really visible, we went backwards and forwards about whether those lights would be real, like actual lights that you could have used in 1981, which we could still use now. In the end, we've kind of tried to fake it. We've used lights that change color. They're LED. They're called rush pars and they change color and they zoom in and out a little bit, which gives me a little more to play with than just having some probably what I would have put on there would have been par cans. They would have gone on and off and they would have been the color that we decided to put in the front of them, whether it would have been blue or red or a gel color. These lights do more than that. By doing that, we tried to fake the front of them. So, we did put barn doors on them, which are like sort of square doors that sit on the front of the the light that kind of hide the lens because a lens of an LED light looks very different to a regular light. Kind of has splodges on it, unfortunately, the barn doors made the bar too heavy and so the bar sagged. So, we took them off and what we've decided to do is put a bit of um frost in front of the lens, which is like a a piece of sort of plastic diffusion, which makes the light spill more when you see it on the floor, but also hopefully disguises the fact that it's not a light from 1981 and it's a light from 2026. There's a lot that happens in this show. There's a lot of musical numbers and so musical numbers require snazzy lighting. So, color changing lights, lights that move about. So, we did we have gone for a rig that's pretty versatile. It's got a lot of moving wash lights in it. It's got some moving profiles and the moving profiles can take gobos, which are little shapes, cutout shapes which make um different patterns on the floor or on the walls. Um the moving profiles can have a hard edge so that you can put shutters in, you can make boxes out of them, you can make shapes out of them. And the wash lights fill the stage with color. They also move about. So I think allocation was 20 lights. I think I have 30.

The beauty of this story, the humor and the resilience of the women that I hope that we managed to tell the story effectively and people learn a little bit about the yeah the history of these women and the personalities that went behind it as well cause it's really brilliant.

WRITER | FRANCES POET

I just stumbled across the idea and I didn't know it. I was a toddler when it was happening and living in Yorkshire. But I'd lived two decades in Scotland and hadn't come across the story. So when I stumbled across it, thought this is an amazing underdog story about, you know, predominantly female workforce being absolutely underestimated by the American owners and by everybody really fighting a battle that they won when nobody expected them to. So I was really excited as soon as I stumbled across it and approached National Theatre of Scotland and said, "I think there's a play in this." Paul English is a journalist from Greenock and he had approached National Theater of Scotland several years before and said, "I think there's a play in this." Paul is a very talented journalist but hadn't been writing theatre and I think the project slightly floundered possibly for that reason. So when I approached National Theatre of Scotland and said, "I'm really interested in this." They said, "Hm, interesting that you should uh should say so. We have kind of come to the end of the road with someone else and would you potentially like to collaborate?" I didn't want to co-write. I didn't feel that that was going to be a sort of productive way forward. And so I spoke to Paul and said, "Look, if you're writing this, I'll back away. That's fine. You tell the story." He didn't want to and said, "No, you go for it and he was able to introduce me to all the women which was amazing access and was a brilliant sort of shooting off point for the project.

The project started with some informal coffees with various women who were workers in the factory. So I think my first meeting was Helen Monahan the shop steward really at the heart of the story and it was actually a couple of I think it was a couple of days after they'd had a big sort of reunion event. Yeah, that would have been right in 21. So, it was all fresh in Helen's mind and she was very open from that first coffee onwards. So, I had a few coffees with a few different people and then said to National Theatre Scotland, what would be amazing is to get a whole day with people all together so that we can hear their stories and start to kind of pull them together. So, we spent the day together, got out flip charts, was sort of writing out possible characters. And at that stage, I hadn't met Maggie before that, but I'd had a few coffees with various people and I kind of gave them my pitch. I said, "Look, I know why I want to write this. I think it's a hugely resonant story. I think it gives us hope. I think it speaks to our times. I don't know why you might want me to write it, but my offer to you is that I will tell it as close to the truth as possible." And they brilliantly seem to put their trust in me from that first moment. And you know, it's a bit of a dance to begin with. I didn't know how much of their personal lives I would be able to dive into, whether they'd be comfortable with that, whether we'd have to sort of stay very much in the sort of realm of the, of the kind of politics of it. And I remember on that first day sort of saying, "It sounds a bit like Finley should be a character." Finley had already died by the time we were gathered. And Helen seemed open to that from the very beginning. And it was clear from her stories about Finley and Maggie Wallace's stories that he was a real character in in the factory and that it would be lovely to include him. So you sort of take tentative steps to see what's comfortable and what sits right. You don't jump at the opportunity to represent someone who you're not going to have a chance to meet. You know, you have to be sort of quite delicate about that. After that development, I went away did more research, started pulling things together and then we had another day in Greenock with the women and that's where Cathy Wallace joined us. We also got Pat Clark who worked at Lithgos and was a big supporter of the women. So at that stage I'd been really focused on what my questions were. I knew what the gaps in my research were and I was able to bring that and actually it was my first time of meeting Cathy Wallace and Cathy and Maggie have an amazing dynamic but also I realised in that moment Cathy was quite good as a fact bringer so when I was getting amazing stories from Maggie and Helen, Cathy would go oh that was Aulds the bakers you know she'd give me the details so you sort of filling filling in the gaps and then really the women I went awol as as far as the women were concerned because then I was working

hard and I'd sort of send them a Christmas card and say still still working on it and they I don't know whether they lost faith. I mean I don't know how much they know how long these processes take. So it was a very special thing where we got together before we announced that the play was going to go on and actually only Helen and Maggie were able to make it but we had this really special time together. We had a lunch and I talked them through choices I'd made. We'd had a development where I was able to pull some different clips and show them those clips. It can be hard to read a play. This was a particularly hard play to read because of the way that music weaved in that. It can be hard to read it on the page. So, we sort of try to find a form in which to say this is what it is and sent them home with a script and they were just thrilled. So, there's a photograph of me and the projector didn't work and I'm holding a laptop to show them a clip and I'm sort of holding it out and it really does look like I'm like, "This is my gift. Please love it." You know, the the the sort of nerves in that moment and of course they were so generous and received it beautifully.

One of the difficult challenges that the story presented is that when the workers talk about it, there was a lot of excitement initially. The decision to barricade, the managers out that first night, sneaking out to get chips or you know, sleeping on the cold floor, family members coming with snacks. Lots of excitement in that first moment. And then from the moment that they sort of set up a shift system, they get a key and they're able to guard the doors to make sure that the the all the valuable fabric stays inside and they working 12 hours. Then it it really was a waiting game. There was people going out to get money to sort of keep them going. You've got Helen working away with her union, still speaking to management, but not a lot of drama and so that was quite a tussle really to work out how to apply a story structure that would be really satisfying and engaging to the story as it happened. So I had lots of different versions of that, but the one that we landed on, I decided that actually the big moment of the play was redundancy day. That was the moment before it played out where Helen was at her most worried. What is going to happen? Are they going to drag us out? Are people that I've been fighting for going to get hurt? Are they going to be arrested? What am I as leader of this asking of the workers who have sort of stayed the course of this 90-day redundancy? So, that felt like the stakes were highest for Helen. And then of course as it played out, instead of the VF heavies coming and dragging them out, what we're met with is this beautiful gesture of solidarity from the miners and from the shipyard men. And so that felt really like a pinnacle moment, a sort of climax moment for Helen. And from there, I mean, that's the 30th of April and they don't get their jobs back until the end of July. What I've done there is let time sort of fast forward quite quickly. That's the kind of win moment. She'd made the argument and now it wasn't a question of being dragged out. It was how VF Corporation could sell and obviously various discussions about selling a factory. Not very interesting. So we sort of fast forward. I do think Helen is sort of the core but you have this jewel protagonist of Maggie Wallace. And so I'm able to let her start to fly at that moment. So it's just before redundancy day that Maggie is sort of wins her place back into the occupation on the promise that she will go and speak at the SNP conference. So then we get to let Maggie fly at that point really and we watch her really grow and we watch her sister be proud of her. We watch Maggie be proud of herself. She sort of changes and that in a way was afforded sort of the drama after that climax moment of redundancy day.

This is a play that is about the American owners seeking profit over people's livelihoods. Unemployment was very high in the UK at this moment, but it was highest in Greenock. So those jobs really counted. That was 240 jobs and VF Corporation gave some spurious reasons about profitability and why that they were closing the factory and taking the machinery away but ultimately it was for profit and that was the argument that Helen Monahan was able to make through the course of it. Also they had taken 10 years of subsidies from Greenock which had paid for the machinery. So there was definitely something on the border of corrupt is certainly hugely unfair. What's interesting about that and sort of depressing about that 45 years on is that nothing has changed. Global capitalism I looked up a statistic from Oxfam that said that the wealth owned by 1% of the global richest is more than the wealth owned by the bottom 95%. So what you see is this huge discrepancy between the rich and the rest. And I think this story chimes into that because what was happening is

profits for the wealthy were being pursued even though that meant that 240 people would be living on the bread line. So the story is as relevant today as it was 45 years ago. It was interesting writing it. I started writing it in the pandemic. Well, that was the first conversation I had with National Theatre of Scotland and that was a moment at which there was some profiteering, some people got wealthier whilst there were frontline workers not given the right safety equipment, you know, given faulty safety equipment or not given it at all. So again, that sort of gap between the wealthy and the worker was really stark. And that's why I took a moment in the play to reference that and reference the fact that a lot of the people when they left the factory went into caring jobs and they were the ones who sort of suffered in that moment. But also I think the reason for bringing the story to 2026 and in a way adding that sort of more bittersweet note to the fact that the jobs only lasted 3 years and that things haven't changed. It's a way of saying to the audience what was won in 81 still we're still fighting for in 2026.

I always wanted this to be a really great night out and it turned out there were some absolute bangers in 1981 and so that felt really exciting in terms of choosing cause there's loads of great songs that came out that year that didn't feel right. I suppose I wanted to go for songs that have this sort of feisty female energy that sort of match those sort of young women in the factory. You know, this is the beginning of a new decade. The sort of new sounds are coming in. But what was really interesting about the period, I've talked a bit about protest and this is a play that is about protest. Ghost Town by the Specials was an extraordinary song that encapsulated all of that, all of what was happening in 1981. All the sort of lack of jobs, the sense of purposelessness of the youth. And what's interesting about that is that song was also recorded during the Brixton riot. So it really feels like that song kind of is rich and sort of fizzing with that moment. And then there was this came slightly later because Lennon had been assassinated in December 1980. The radio was constantly playing his songs and working class hero felt a lovely sort of nod to these beautiful women that I'd met who had so inspired me.

I feel it's both things. It's very heavy whilst you're working on it. But the flip side, because they're in the room with you, all those people you've met are in the room with you as you write anything. And you go, "Is that all right? Is that all right?" But of course, because they're in the room with you, their voices are on the page, all the knowledge and authenticity that the play requires is they've gifted you that. So, there are incredible gifts that come from telling those real stories. But there is this sort of sense of burden and responsibility. And so with this kind of work, it's always nice when the critics like it, but really there's only, you know, the only criticism that you care about is the real people. So there was a moment in rehearsals where some of the women that we represent in the play came along to see the rehearsals. The actors were nervous. I was nervous. It was so important that they were pleased with what we were presenting. And it was the most beautiful moment that they were crying, they were laughing, they were saying, "Ah, yeah, you know, she was always late. That's exactly right." It was just a really beautiful moment in which they gave their permission and said, "Yeah, you've got it right." That came again at press night when they came and they saw the full thing and they were pleased. So, there are many gifts to telling those true stories. If I had just seen the story and tried to write it on my own, there'd be so many details missing about things like how did the factory work? How do you make up the jeans? Um I can then run with those details. So Maggie telling me that she worked on waists and there was a big a big blade. I'm then allowed to weave that into the speech that Maggie makes and lean on metaphor and and explore what it is for her to think, ah, I feel like if I lose my job, I will know what it's like for that blade to come down. So, I can run with what they tell me and take some creative license with that, but without that initial detail, I'm pulling things and they're not going to be as authentic or funny. These women are brilliant storytellers. There's some bits where, you know, I've just I've literally just taken what they say and put it on and audiences laugh and I get to bathe in the laugh and it's not my laugh. Um, and then there's other things where you just channel them so much. They're so vivid for you that you know exactly how they should do it. So there's lines I was able to start to speak like they speak. I didn't have to kind of conjure and make a three-dimensional character. They they were sort of delivered to me.

I think a big theme is finding your voice. Um, and I think Maggie goes on the steepest journey with that because she is messing around. She sort of wants to be useful and asked to do more, but she doesn't. But then when she nearly gets kicked out, she gets invited in. And I think it's a really gratifying moment when she does deliver her speech to the SNP in Aberdeen and she starts off and she's getting it all wrong and this is not how you should do the speech. But she finds her way and she delivers a really powerful moving speech and then she's at the next place and the next place and you see her grow her confidence. And of course, one of the tragic elements of the story is that having grown to be this person who is political, who can speak, who can really win people round to their cause, the win is that she has to go back to a sewing job that she never really liked. I think that thing of finding your voice is also really relevant to Helen who didn't want to get in front of the cameras. We show which is absolutely true that moment that the first time she speaks she's wolf whistled the the disrespect and and the sense of what that period was what it was to be a woman in 1981 putting yourself forward and how that I think in many ways is internalised in Helen and and affects the fact that she didn't feel she could go into politics. So Helen finds her voice and again I think there's a tragic element there because I think 45 years on the world would have been better if Helen Monahan had gone into politics. So yeah, finding your voice is a big is a big theme. Solidarity is a big theme and I think that works. I think that part of the reason I chose Redundancy Day as the climax of the play is because this is this glorious moment of solidarity, but it hits other moments too. We know early on lift goes come and they give 50p off each salary. And I think also within the workforce itself, there's that lovely moment where Maggie says, "I trust you so much. I'd let you pack my parachute, Helen." And Finlay is like, you know, I think we all feel that if you say jump, we'll jump. And she's like, "I don't want you to jump. Just keep standing." But you've got this sense of solidarity and and that also is registered where when Helen really has had enough. Helen wants to walk away and she can't walk away because of everybody else. So that that that sense of and and it's explored through family, this concept of family. We're a team. We look out for each other. So I think yeah, finding your voice, solidarity, family, they're some of the kind of key themes.

It was always a little bit complex what I wanted the audience to feel from this. I always wanted two simultaneous emotions. I wanted them to celebrate the win and celebrate those women and remember those women and let those women have their rightful place in history. But I also wanted simultaneously for them to register that that battle nothing about that battle has changed 45 years on. So I wanted audience to celebrate the win feel hopeful and inspired and empowered to go out and fight injustice today in 2026.

SOUND DESIGNER | KEVIN MURRAY

The Calvary are coming!
We are no on our own anymore.
Nae need to feel lonely.
Lonely. Who was feeling lonely?
Stand and deliver!

I'm the highway man that you're too scared to mention. I spend my cash on the flash and grabbing your attention. The devil takes your stereo. It's your record collection. The way you look, you'll qualify for next year's old age pension.

Sound designer, I think, is a very wide umbrella term for a number of skills. But in theatre, I'd say there's sort of three main tacks to it. There's the designing of the actual system and the speakers and where they go and how we play sound in the space. There is the making of the content and the sound effects. And in this show there's also working with the arranger and the musical director to sculpt the sound of the band. So for this show that's the three things I think I'm doing.

First conversation with director I think really you see is what you know what is this and also when I came on board Jess the set designer had already done the initial white card design with a kind of band space so I had a clear idea that you know it's a working men's club in the 80s and then having spoken with Claire McKenzie who's arranger on it and knowing the instrumentation. That's my starting point. It's like so it's a pub gig but also there's a limiting practical factor which is you know the show has to get in and be ready in a day. So I have to think about how we can't just keep adding things and adding. So I took the view of well it's a pub gig. So it's you know drums, guitar, bass and keys and we're not going to hide the amps. We're not going to hide the monitors. I'm going to have microphones that are very much of the period. So before rehearsals start, I like to try and get a good idea of what kit we need in the room for rehearsal straight away so that we're never ever hampering, you know, the rehearsal process. So that's kind of the first thing. And then I like to read the script, have the conversation with the director early to start thinking about what those sounds might be. And I'll maybe just put some into a file to listen to myself while watching rehearsal. For this show specifically, I suppose as I watch rehearsal, we start adding those sounds in. Also, Shona is making the sounds of the synths, but I'm making the sounds of the guitar and drums. And so, as I'm listening to those instruments and then listen to the original tracks, I'm also trying to whenever there's a break, I'll be up and I'll be messing with the drum kit sounds and I'll be messing with the guitar sounds. And so, that all happens sort of gently over those four weeks and and you're in rehearsal much. I kind of get pulled in both directions because you need to be in rehearsal to see runs, to play stuff, but you want to be on stage talking to the guys and making sure that things are going in the right place. And then the Friday and Saturday before we start tech are the really big days for sound. Friday we'll tune the system which is basically make all the speakers line up in terms of uh time so nothing sounds weird and fadey and then I'll make sure that all the sound effects are coming out the places are meant to be all those very practical things. And then the Saturday morning before we started tech is band call. So that's the first time that I get to be just the sound team and the the musicians trying all the songs, having listened to them, you know, the effects on the guitar, looking at the mix. So we've got 4 hours what you kind of get to do all that and obviously get all the cast mics uh balanced right as well so they don't sound in a cardboard box. So that's probably the most intense bit and then and then obviously tech rehearsals. The the challenging thing is that quite often you end up having to be in rehearsals quite a lot to understand the show and then you need to go home and then you need to make stuff. So it can get quite long some days. I think good sound design brings emotion and I think if it's really good sound design actually nobody talks about it. It's I think the reality I think as you walk

out of a piece of theatre and you've been moved I think the sound design should help carry both emotion and place.

I suppose just as you watch the rehearsals and you feed things into it and see how they sit within it. I think I'm probably quite bad with this. As you start kind of throwing loads of sounds at it almost as if you're trying to justify your role and then there's so much underscore in a lot of the songs that actually a lot of that sound just becomes unnecessary. So you start stripping back and and you know silence is as important as noise in sound design. So you have to you have to give space for it to breathe. And obviously you know dialogue is king. So you always need to make sure you can hear what they say. So those are kind of the key principles. You need to hear the story first. You need to give space to breathe rather than just lob sound effects. We tried a the fire scene. We tried a bit of you know fire sound effect to give life to it and it just sounds like somebody frying sausages. It's terrible. So you know that's what I've learned. Don't use frying sausage at the bit.

So initially the key relationship I suppose is director first kind of get a conversation understanding of what their overall idea and view of the show is and then during rehearsals it's my closest relationship is probably between myself and Shona Murray the musical director and then Chris Gorman who's our sound operator kind of bouncing between them because because the sound design and the music is so closely linked I think there's quite a lot of work between Shona and myself in making sure that we sort of deliver the best product because some of the effects are samples from the music that are then used to help texture the piece. And so there's a lot of those kind of conversations and then there's little trick things like, you know, some kind of acapella. We had to figure out a way to give them a pitch note. And so that's a kind of blend of sound design and music. Because the nature of the show and how it tours, we're going to put the main speakers into the space and then dress them to look like they were from the 1980s. Uh that didn't work. So, we've moved them out of the space. It just sort of overshadowed the aesthetic of the piece. There's another part I think in sound design that's really important that's forgotten sometimes is the best place for a speaker is generally the place you don't want it cause it invariably it's emulating someone speaking. So, the best way you want it is in front of their face. Obviously, you have to make those compromises working with the set designer particularly and the lighting designer. So, we've moved those speakers out, but we do have a couple little onstage effect speakers. So, we can do things like radio playing in the background in the fact in the world. And then there's obviously some upstage speakers which allows us to kind of move the sound from very present in this pace to into the background to just give us a subtle texture to help establish the scene. There's quite a lot of considerations to balance I think is probably the reality of it. And you need to be prepared to be understanding of the whole team and not just nah it needs to sound like this.

There's a couple of moments of meta stepping out of the world in the scene and the play starts like that and we do quite a stylized moment of all the women doing this beautiful choreograph piece by Chris Wilson. The reference I used was Money by Pink Floyd. So we took some I took some factory sound effects from old sewing factors and I chopped them all up and then we put them to a BPM. So it's a very stylized and so that's a lot of fun. And then of course you break out that and then you go back into natural world cause you walk into the set and it's a working men's club as it would be called in those days and we start by them remembering in modern day and so we had to quickly kind of tell the story we're all working in a factory so there's a stylized moment to do that which I think is an excellent bit of writing by Francis to be honest and then we slip into the to the actual world that and actually do you know one I love is Kings of the World Frontier by Adam the Ant when we have a second drum comes in and then we do some clever magic where they then leave the drum kits, but the drum kits keep playing. So, click track and backing track. That's one of the things Shona and I worked on. So, Shona has to basically hit a go button and that starts a click track in her ear and she runs around and it starts playing the drums and then Maddie gets up in the drum kit and then Chris then fades out that drum kit and fades up the other drum kit that's been pre-recorded by Maddie and then Shona then leads the drum kit and then that gets faded up by Chris and then they go and

do some action stuff. So it's all quite it's quite uh it takes a bit of rehearsing to get that timing wise to work.

The playback we use program called QLAB which is pretty standard in theater and events and it's just allows us to play multiple sound effects and stems is what you refer to with a collection of musical tracks. Stems are actually a group of tracks. So drum stems and guitar stems. So we're actually playing back tracks because a track is an individual instrument recording. So for Ghost Town, we'll record the keys and the guitar and the bass and the drums all independently. And it just allows us a bit more flexibility in kind of mixing it and putting effects on it and stuff. So there's one song we've recorded the whole band and then I'll mix them into so that we can basically crossfade into the band playing out the radio and that's pre-recorded. So that's QLAB and that's controlled by both Chris front of house but also a second set of cues is controlled by Shona because Shona has to control the click track and the tracks. And then we use a program called Main Stage, which is what Shona uses to create all the synthesiser sounds. And I do a lot of the edits on Logic, which is a digital audio workstation to or DAW. But for the guitar sounds, um, we're actually using pedals that all existed in 1980 to try and get some more genuine guitar sounds of the time. So the drum kit is electronic drum kit using our Roland V drums TD11 brain. We went with an electronic kit because in tiny venues the drum kit is the most acoustically demanding and it's the most complex in terms of micing and leveling. So electronic drum kits these days are amazing. So we made that choice early on which has then allowed us to you know make the drums sound much more like each song. So, you know, fashion has got quite a almost electronicity snare sound, whereas Ghost Town has a really bouncy snare because it's, you know, got that almost reggae feel to it. And then the pedals for the guitar is more about trying to kind of be a wee bit historically accurate with sculpting those sounds. Um, and they're all controlled uh off stage by Archie, our pedal technician, who'll be pressing pedals frantically during songs. And other gear was sort of dictated by what we had with the budget. So we use a Yamaha CL1 sound desk and that talks to a big rack backstage while a radio makes which is on a protocol called Dante which is how we make sound talk on networks. And then for the sheer practicality of choreography and movement obviously all of the cast and the instruments have to be wireless so they can move about which can add a wee bit of complication. So we tried hard to limit that and there's one there's two instruments that are only used once. So, we decided to not put them on wireless just cuz we've ran out of channels to be honest. Um, and that's the accordion and the acoustic guitar. So, the accordion is picked up in a boundary mic when it's downstage, which is a little mic that sits in the floor and normally just picks up shoe shuffles, but it'll help lift that and then we'll use utilize the cast head mics to sort of lift that accordion in that moment. Fortunately, in a sort of conceptual way, when the band's on the stage, they're obviously they're a band and they have to sound like a band. when they're playing the accordion, it's a protest song and they're sort of out by the fire. So, it can be a bit grittier, you know, and a bit looser because it's it's workers just singing around the fire and protest and that's that sort of sits fine in that world. And then towards the end, we have Working Class Hero by John Lennon that's done the acoustic guitar because it's just one number. We're using little wireless system which works over Wi-Fi which I don't entirely trust which which is why it's not using the main instruments but because it's an acoustic guitar again in that moment if we were to lose the wireless fidelity the acoustic is going to carry through and that'll all be okay. So this is just some of the decisions and compromises you sort of have to make. So starting with the downstage system we use a pair of speakers called Q7s which is by D&B German company who most theatres in Britain tend to use D&B I think primarily because actually it's the best sort of PA in the affordable range for dialogue it's really good for intelligibility so you would see it less on rock gigs but in theatres where you obviously it's more about the speaking and the singing that that's the most common one. So, we got Q7s and they sit at top of some two subs called Q subs, which give us that bottom end. So, when the when Maddie hits the the low tom, you're going to hopefully feel it right in your chest, and then mid-stage, we've got two little tannoy type speakers that came out of a prop store that I wanted to sound tinny and rubbish because it's meant to be in the radio and annoyingly they sound really quite nice. So, [laughter] so we've had to do quite a lot of processing on all the things that come out of that so they sound rubbish. Um, and then upstage we've got a

couple of smaller E3 speakers also by D&B and they're used to really help set those textures and tones upstage. So, we you've got like factory sound effects come in. It's bit oppressive at first and then we take that into the upstage speakers and we use what's called a low pass filter. So, all goes and then it just sits up there it doesn't overwhelm the dialogue. It should hopefully still give us a sense of, you know, you're in that world. Then on stage, because the drum kit's electronic, we place a drum monitor behind the drum kit and then we feed quite a lot of the drum kit back through that monitor. So, it's an audience perspective, it sounds like the drums coming from there, as well as the PA. Otherwise, it sounds weird that the drums are coming from over there, not over there. And then the MD's got a monitor and in ear monitors as well for a click track which is just but because Shona's also performing in it we can't- you normally get in ears are like little molded push in things. So we've given her a pair of 1980 Sony type Walkman headphones so that it's in the world so she can still hear click track and then run out and do some stuff.

Kind of really make our the sound consistent. That's why we tour our own PA and we've kept it quite simple. In the smaller spaces, that sound is very much what we have made in rehearsals. And in the bigger spaces, we would then whatever comes out of our front speakers, we would tie into the house PA to just reinforce and cover the upper areas with uh sound. So that's that's it. I mean, I've had to make the compromise sadly when you ever you get people on microphones. When you have people on mics, you want to try and place the sound in a what you call a center cluster and maybe front fill speakers and it helps image the sound. So you delay it so that it sounds like it's coming from their mouth and not a PA. We can't do that in every venue. So we don't have that and it just has to come out the left and right. So that's just a compromise I you just have to accept and then make work. So another compromise with speaker replacement is that I like to do surround sound as well. I think it makes it more immersive for the audience. But again because the practicalities of this show, the guys had to get it in and up in a day. We just had to be realistic about how many speakers we had. They had to deliver the same quality of product that is being delivered from venue one onwards.

I think I'd like people to take out a reminder that protest is important and matters and can make a difference. And actually during rehearsals I went to see Everyone to Kenmuir Street and it's a reminder of you know how important it is to stand up and to protest and to be a community which I think is something we've lost in society with the online world.

COMPANY MANAGER | MICKEY GRAHAM

So in the show we have various fake newspaper headlines. We've tried to use vintage newspapers like the Greenock Telegraph and then we made up the headlines and done some artwork for that and get it sent away to get printed off at the right sizes cause there's very specific sizes for tabloids and for broadsheets. So that's an example of one of the the newspapers there. So it's Linwood car plant due to close. So that's all artwork that we've made up using that as a template from the company themselves. And then we've got our broadsheet here. So we chose stock footage. There's a company that we've used down south who make up the the newspapers as a as a basic print and then if you give them the the titles they can then put that in. Um so yeah, that's our Glasgow Herald. There's Margaret Thatcher and here's another e one. Big vic- victory for sitting women. So that the headlines are based on what the headlines would have been at the time in 1981. But these aren't actual vintage newspapers. They're just designed and made by us. This is a yellow pages. Within the Tron's prop room they have all sorts. So the the company stage manager here, who's also assistant stage manager for the show, Susie, has quite a lot of old vintage paperwork that she keeps cuz everything is useful in stage management work cause you could do a show in the 70s, 80s, 90s. Good to keep these sort of things ready for whenever you need them in a show. So at one point in the show one of our cues is to drop a banner that is a celebration of them having won. So we jump ahead in time to 7 months after the start of the barricade and the women have secured their jobs. So, they have within the factory they made their own celebratory banner. And our deputy stage manager cues this as part of the action and then we just from the side we just pull a little lever and it releases some pins at the top.

In the show we use a flame paste to create a fake fire because the characters in the show as a protest against the company set fire to the redundancy letters. So, rather than really setting fire to the letters we use a paste to create the flame because it's a safer and more controlled way of having a fire on stage. It's commonly used in stunt work and commonly used in magic routines and stuff. So, anytime you see flames on stage this is the the product that'll be used. We tried the spacing of it because obviously we need to conceal the letters and we don't want the letters catching fire. So, we we kind of split the bucket into a half so there's a little secret compartment that they can put the letters into so they'll never catch fire and we just had a bit of a try and but it seemed fairly obvious to use a fire bucket with sand so it's already really safe as is to control the flame should anything go wrong. So, this is the section here that looks like it's on fire and then the letters go into this section to hide they won't ever get caught. And obviously if they did catch fire that's quite an acrid smoke for the cast to be on stage with and we wouldn't want that. So, we want it to be a a nice clean burn each time. During the scene the the performer lights the match while singing and then sets fire to the flame paste. So, as you can see it's pretty instantaneous. Match out back into the sand and then they just let it burn out during the scene. I physically come in and do that. Takes things out. So, I'm going to take you round to stage right which is where we keep most of the off-stage props.

This is our wing space and this side is marked up very clearly for act one with um fluorescent yellow to make it different from act two props, so just it's really easy for the actors then to grab at the last minute when they come running off because there's very little time for them. In between they run off and then immediately they have to run on for the next scene. So, they just have to grab and go. They don't have time to think about it. So, just to make it as easy for them as possible. And again, it's all vintage act one. Most of the stuff that we've found in stock because again, we keep things like landline telephones because we always need those in shows. There's quite a lot of knitting in the show. We had some specialist knitting done for us by various volunteers from across the National Theatre Scotland organisation. Fake flowers are used in the show at point as well. They don't really have too much live stuff like that because they will just die throughout the run. We don't want to replace them time and time again. We've also had some various bits of artwork made up for a royal wedding celebration in the show. So, these here have been made up by our assistant stage manager. And again, more stuff that we've made up for the the royal wedding. Again, some fake newspapers. This is the headline for this one is about the Brixton riots, which just happened in 1981. Again, so everything is from 1981. These are the- We've got various ends of denim that are used as part of the scene. So, we've had to cut up quite a lot of specialist Lee jeans. Um the cast they kind of recreate the factory scene during the show where they have bits of fabric that are meant to be joining together. So, now we'll head over to stage left where the prompt corner is and where the show is cued from.

So, we've not got as many props on this side. It's not as busy as the stage right side because during most of the show this side of the stage is barricaded cause that that's meant to be the offices on this side. But, we do have an old CB radio that's used during the show. And a rather wonderful fake pineapple and cheese hedgehog, which was very popular at dinner parties at that time, apparently. It is just a basically foam polystyrene wrapped in tin foil and it's just yeah, polystyrene coated with a scrim and then painted. So, yeah, it's not edible. [laughter] And we've also got a clipboard. This here is the This is acetate, which is for our overhead projector and this is the names of the strikers who took part in the original strike. So, we project their name during the show, as well. And this is the prompt corner. So, this is where the show is cued from by our deputy stage manager, Brian. And we have a script here which this is where all the lights and sound are cued from. Um and each cue is numbered and has an input point on the script that Brian follows. Whenever that point happens, he tells the lighting operator. There's three parts that are important to a book. There's the input point uh where the cue has to happen precisely every single time. There's the number of cues just so that we don't get mixed up. We always have to have them numbered quite carefully. And there's the blocking, which is on this side. This is telling us where each actor is position-wise and where they go. So, if an actor has to exit stage right, this is um recorded here as part of the blocking. Um so, it gives you an idea. We do a rough little sketch of the set as a an overhead. And then we can position the actors with with um shorthand of C for Kiara and F for example for their their names. Uh we're just going to head back on stage now to show the overhead projector.

So, this is what we use to project the names that were on the acetate. This is an overhead projector, which is quite a vintage piece of equipment that we wouldn't normally use in theatre. We would probably use more modern projection techniques than this. But, it is in keeping of the time, so it works really well. So, the names of all the strikers get projected on the overhead onto our screen on here.

BREAKING DOWN THE SCENE | GIRLS ON FILM

It's a really useful sequence for me as a writer. There were lots of little anecdotes that the women involved in the occupation told me about. So things like the sun lamp, different bits where Maggie's making life a little bit harder for Helen and you know other moments I wanted to register like Helen wanting to protect her son and daughter who were in the factory and that sense of how frightening it was to be considered militant at that point and how that would stop you being reemployed. So there were lots of little moments that I wanted to connect. And when you write a play that's based on history, the easiest thing to get wrong is to make it very episodic. And that means that you have episode episode and you go and it stops you feeling any sense of momentum, any sense of movement. So, I always knew when I was taking on this this real story that I had to find a way to group those important little beats into single movements so that you take the audience with you. So, *Girls on Film* is a really helpful holding form. In a way, it is the montage scene in a film where Helen gets good at fighting. So, she doesn't want to speak to STV on the first night. She knows what she has to do as a shop steward and she has to keep speaking to management. We've seen her negotiating with Bob Charters. We know what she's doing. We know what that consists of. She just wants to keep doing that and then she learns that she has to be more than herself as she says in the play and she has to go out through that sequence and the sense of movement I've given it is that Helen is growing. So she starts out and she is being heckled, you know, and she's not doing her best speech. She gets her win, which is she's got her buckets full because Helen is brilliant and she was brilliant from the beginning, but she's not comfortable in that mode. She's fearful of what it might do for her son. She's constantly having to answer this question from the press of why are your union not with you? That's a very lonely place to be to be involved in an occupation without the backing of your union. And then by the end of that sequence and I think it is played beautifully. I think it is directed beautifully. At the end of that sequence she, she is steelier. She's a much steelier Helen by the end when she says to Mr. Smith the head of the Tailor and garment union, you banged your fists. You you know basically she says you're a hypocrite. You're a hypocrite. Why aren't you fighting for us? And it's a lovely moment. It's not written in the script. It's the way they play it which I'm so pleased with. They play it like she's overstepped there that that she's lost it. Then she walks up to the mic and she says, "I'm pleased to be able to inform." And and then we finish *Girls on Film* finishes. I think there's a lovely again a lovely directoral choice where Helen, you know, she's more than a lady. Helen is sort of given this moment where she sort of freezes in the doorway and sees they're looking at her and it celebrates her. So, in terms of the writing, it was a really useful way of hitting a number of beats that I needed to hit and holding those beats in a way with a really strong sense of forward momentum and showing Helen growing through that period of time.

Yeah, I avoided directing it for quite a long time because I just knew it was going to be really hard because it's a sequence the way it goes. Music scene, music scene, music scene, music scene and because there's only six people, I don't have enough people to do the scenes and the music. Like, I knew they were going to have to come in and out. We so we started by learning the song and then I worked through each of the different sort of scene sections with Jo principally because she's the one who plays Helen. She's the one who drives the story. She's the one who goes, "This is what needs to happen." And it's her who sort of follows around. And Maggie takes the baton off her sometimes. But more often than not, it's Jo's story about where she's going and how she sort of develops her confidence talking to the press about what's going on cause she's a quite, you know, she doesn't like trouble. This is a character who wants to just actually be at home and go to her work and go home again. But she has to start talking to the press in order to gather momentum. And actually she starts to build on that and she goes quicker and quicker and quicker and gets more and more confident as she goes. She's not even sure she wants to do it or indeed what she's going to say, but

she's she knows she has to because otherwise it's going to fail right from the off. And so we sort of plotted it through bit by bit and it was absolutely painstaking. So I think it took us an entire day to get from beginning to end which for a 12 minute sequence is like really a very long time. So what we were doing was working out who would play what in what bit. So we always knew that Hannah would play big flame. We knew that Aaron who plays Finley, that track would play Mr. Smith, but the rest of it was all to play for. What we really wanted to do is to get a sort of loads of different journalists. And ideally what I would have loved to have had is had journalists pursuing Helen around, but they're all playing instruments like so I couldn't have that. So, we had to work out a way that they could speak to her and do the lines of the journalists, look like journalists, and indeed make sure we knew what we were looking at. Quite early on, we thought the ensemble player, so Maddie, who plays drums, would lead on a lot of that. And what we thought was is that every time she delivered a line, she'd be able to stand up, but she was like, I can't play and stand at the same time. So we had to sack that off and just do the lines from the drum kit. Whenever anybody was able to put their instrument down for a moment, they did that and sort of got involved in the scene. So it was literally a process of breaking it down tiny bit by tiny bit and understanding for Jo particularly what it was she was after in that point, where she was going, what was going on. And also remembering that even though she was talking to the press and going as we would describe but nowadays as going viral, she was still going home and making tea for her husband. And you know, they had chores in the factory. So we were like, how can we tell the story of that at the same time as being out in the world? Basically, we sort of hid behind props really cause we were like, what if you put your pinny on and you start cleaning? At one point we thought she could be on the phone and she could be doing an interview on the phone while she was also trying to have a conversation with somebody else. And then Francis came and went, "She can't do that. The phone doesn't work here. It works up the road on the hill." Like that's not going to work. So we had to change all that. That was quite last minute. And then kind of Chiara was nipping in and out trying to do scenes as well. We realized that we didn't know how to make Chiara look sunburnt until the very last minute. We tried about six different ways to make that work until eventually the brilliant Ailsa from Wardrobe went, "Well, just try it with some makeup." And so, if you're watching Chiara's track, she disappears on stage at one point with a brush and she's putting makeup on like that. She dumps it on the floor and runs into the scene, runs back, picks the brush off up again, which on the other end has foundation, and then she just covers it up again. So, by the end of that sequence, her face is like caked in makeup. Because whenever we worked out how to make a little bit work, we'd have to run it together and go, "Okay, we've got that bit now. Let's move on to the next section." It was only when we got into the technical rehearsal, we realized that what we needed to do was to put lights on each different person wherever they were and wherever they were speaking. So they that also meant the actors not only had to move very fast, but they had to get exactly to a particular spot on the stage so they could be lit because there's no follow spots. So I suppose we sort of did it in sections but it was about trying in every section we were trying to change the picture as well. So when she goes to do the protest the first time she goes out and speaks publicly to the pipe fitters and shop stewards conference she would be standing at a mic. So we need to give her a mic. She'd be high up cause she'd be stood on a stage somewhere. Let's put her standing on a chair and then she'll have a very long mic that would help her out. And then we were like oh she should be carrying a bucket. So that's like one picture the bucket has to be got rid of and then the next picture she has to be somewhere else. So it was about kind of trying to find the story beats to hit so that you could then move back into the music for a moment and then back into another world basically so that every, and because so many weeks moved by through the process of that that sequence, you want to sort of be telling the the time moving on sections as well, which we did through Yeah they kind of pull off dates on a calendar at the side, but also try to play the pressure of what it feels like in week one compared to week six, how they physically will have changed because they'd be more tired. There's something about the power and the energy of that sequence that I sort of feel like sums up the whole play that I got that sequence is great.

For me, it would be very different from the guys in the band cause they had to learn the song. The song has to vamp when there's scenes and words going underneath it.

Yeah, I think because of all the choreo with something like Girls on Film that we had to introduce and all the little sections that we didn't learn it like that. We learned them as full songs and then we figured out the sections that we were going to do. So, I think it was important for us to be so comfortable with music that we could chop them up, learn dance moves, do the scene afterwards.

Yeah. And we actually rehearsed Girls on Film for two solid days when we blocked it and put it together. It took it took a long time because there's so much detail within each section

and so there's a lot of timing issues with that. I think everything had to be done in isolation and then when we started to run it technically in the tech you could feel it coming together and Jemima I think always had the vision in our head but we were all going 'what is this why am I getting this what's happening now' and then the minute I was like all right she's like well darling you're doing this because you're getting ready you're going to do that and then you're speaking to them and this journalist and all that I was like all right okay and then you find your route through and now although it terrifies me it's one of the moments I do really enjoy when I get into it I'm like oh yeah I know what I'm doing I'm going to see, Michael Foot, I'm getting my pinny on. I'm going to clean the table and this is my brain's here and I'm speaking to the guys at the thing. The pathway through it now is really obvious. It wasn't at the beginning. You just had to trust in the process that Jemima had, I think she had this real big vision in her head and that's what she wanted of it. This is probably the joy of doing something like theatrically. You're in doing that by the lights, by the music, by a different tempo about a different jacket going on, someone playing a different character. I go from Cathy into like seconds into big flame this Liverpudlian and activist and I do have to say a thing in my head so that when I come out with the Liverpudlian and it is at least in a it's at least in that world because sometimes it takes a few lines to get into an accent but you do it physically as well. So I physically do it and then I go that one that one I'm going to that one and that gets me in to say that one. Helen Helen just quietly under my breath to help me get in cause. then when I'm in I've got a few seconds and then I'm back out of her again.

I don't know there's a bit that I just loving it where Helen is separate from the music. So we've kind of had a wee bit of a break. You kind of maybe think the song might be over even though the drama is still up and you you finish your conversation turn around and she just gives a nod to Maddie. Maddie brings back on the drums and then we we say that we've got the backing from the union and then we go into the final bit of the chorus and the first night that we did it the audience gave a cheer and I think we all just were so thankful that they gave a cheer cause like oh they get it and they've been on the journey of that piece and they followed it because it's easy for us now cause we've mapped it out but we just go for I hope that they can follow that along with it and I think for me that was such a big win actually when we first opened cause I was like we've worked so hard in this bit and I think that is a play within itself. Yeah. It's almost like you work your like you get through the first bit and then we've always said like when you get to girls on film you can kind of breathe cause that almost does feel like it's a mini play within the play.

If you know the song girls on film it starts off a 16 count of a camera flash. What we wanted to do is make sure that we were replicating those camera flashes in time, precisely in time with the sound. So how we I work with Kev, Kev Murray who's the sound designer to use a function called OSC which joins the lighting and the sound together which means that when you trigger the sound which is triggered on stage by Shona who's the musical director. She triggers the sound it goes and that also triggers the lighting desk. It's very clever. And the lights flash. Hopefully, everybody will recognize that those are camera flashes. Um, we just used some of the moving lights to make the camera flashing. And then further on, uh, Chris then triggers some of those lights in response to there's a really fast-paced bit of dialogue between journalists and Helen, main protagonist, and she's getting cut off by almost line by line. So to help punctuate that, we're doing little snippet flashes of the sampled uh camera flash from Duran Duran. And when that camera flash goes on, the reason it's controlled by

Chris is he can then send a control message to the lighting desk so that Emma Jones, our lighting designer, can have flashes of light so it's all synced up in time. I wanted to make sure that the stage was lit because it's a musical number, but also there's a really important storytelling moment going on where Helen is with all the journalists and in the kind of limelight and all the cameras are flashing on her. So, we're kind of a dual thing was happening and then that kind of continues to weave in and out of this whole section, always second guessing what's going to be coming next. So, you're kind of trying to you don't want to, as a lighting designer, you don't want to be like, "Look here, look here, look here." You really want the audience to follow the path of the lighting with the sound that's happening at the same time. So, it was a real collaboration. I would say every time there's a flash on the sound, you'll see a flash in the lighting. It's not hard, but it takes a bit of time to program it in. So, it's like a real Yeah, like I say, it's a collaboration of lighting and sound.