

Onward March is a text by curator Georgia Stephenson, written in response to Luke Burton's exhibition *Press-gang* at Gerald Moore Gallery, Eltham College.

The story explores themes of control, growth and potential. The basis for the piece is an abstracted recollection of a formative drama lesson that the author experienced in Year 10.

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for Luke Burton's exhibition *Press-gang*
at Gerald Moore Gallery

The portacabin was an icebox. Even still, we were made to shed our outer skins. Cheeks in full blush as hands fade through ruby and violet to notes of pale purple. Every Tuesday morning we anticipated our circular arrangement in this chiller. Patiently lining along the ramp outside until we were permitted to enter. Only then could we assume our henge position. Toes poking through the tights of outstretched legs, knees tucked into chins, static bristling from nylon on irritated, exhausted carpet tile.

After forty five minutes we'd be coming up to room temperature having exercised our breath, projection and choreography, after pairwork and parallels, after call, response and echo. This was a harvesting, an organising and arranging of sorts. You two together. Those with them. No partner? Then make a three. We were speculated upon, what would the outcome of specific combinations be? Which ones of us would yield the best results together?

After five months, the next process began. Cold again, we queued, like we had every week prior. Still, the scene was exact apart from one detail; the usually open curtains were clinging to the windows with a heavy excess of condensation.

The door swung open silently in the way that doors do when they're met, off guard and with force. Ice slid towards us through the air, ordering a "Get. Inside.". At double time and in hushed tones our shadowless shapes followed a routine in the dark.

"Get up". We rose. "Turn". "March".

Limbs warmed with quickened breath, arms swinging, lungs snatching what they could between the deafening instructions that were roared our way. "Repeat. After. Me". We repeated. We gasped. We repeated. We marched. Another roar. No speed, volume or action would satisfy. "Jump". "Cross". "Mix". One after the other, feet crashed into carpet - into boards - into joists. The built up static caused some of us to be shocked, and we'd jolt away from the momentum of the group.

This in turn, prompted a cool claw to reach into our hot mulch to remove the inconsistencies. The snags in the system. But our churn had developed an agenda of its own. It swilled us around and spat us out. One by one we hit the wall with a soaking red splatter. The drenched curtains smeared even more at the glass, desperate not to bear witness to the intense expression they were concealing.

The following Tuesday, every single one of us returned promptly. Like kids queuing for a rollercoaster ride, eager to be tossed and turned. The monotonous order that had been prescribed to us for all those months beforehand had been replaced by sheer elation that truly anything could happen when that door opened. We were fizzing on potential. A near perfect blend of discipline and disorder.