

imitating the dog: Performing in a Digital Environment

Morgan Bailey on performing for imitating the dog

introduction

Morgan Bailey has performed in many imitating the dog productions, including *War of the Worlds*, in which he acted and operated a camera live on stage. Here he describes what it takes to hold a performance and a frame together at the same time, what ITD asks of its performers, and what he would want a student actor to practise first.

This document is based on a written interview. Morgan's answers have been edited into continuous prose; the words are his own. A short glossary at the end explains the technical terms.

the work in practice

Performing and operating a camera at once

The hardest part of operating a camera while simultaneously performing is maintaining the quality of the frame throughout. There are moments that require a well-tempered performance and physical restraint: not only to remain in someone else's frame, but also to hold fast in capturing a suitable angle on someone else's performance in the middle of a scene. The difficulty is made very apparent by the lack of opportunity to check either frame's accuracy. Essentially, we have to trust in our rehearsal process, and one another, to find a sweet spot that works differently every single performance.

A moment that got away

There was a moment during the rehearsal process of *War of the Worlds* where Gareth's character, Will, was hallucinating Amy's character, Evie, during the first walk to Epsom. As it was intended as a dream within a dream, the team of directors wanted to meld both stage action and cinematic picture, to illustrate how detached this was from the reality of the main narrative. Bonnie Baddoo and I, as the camera operators, would capture Gareth Cassidy as he walked through a spent London backdrop, and Amy Dunn would walk around him, periodically passing our lenses as though circling prey. Meanwhile, tech would manually cut between my camera and Bonnie's, so that Amy was there but not there. Ultimately, it proved too difficult a moment to choreograph effectively in the time we had. I think it would have been a standout moment, and I wish we had been able to implement it.



War of the Worlds (2026)

What the camera is

I think of the camera as a tool, but not just an idle piece of machinery. It's much more than that, and should be treated as such. It can be temperamental and heavy, but if you're safely within a flow state, it can become an enjoyable element in your track. It's a permanent cog in the play that relies on you to execute and utilise it efficiently, so I suppose, in saying this, it does effectively become an extension of you, because you need to know it in the same way you'd know what you require from your body for a specific character.

the performance approach

What ITD asks of a performer

ITD requires dexterity and active problem-solving from their touring crew and cast. Things will and do go wrong. I shared this reality with my cast members during rehearsals, and during our tour things did, in fact, go wrong. I've developed an ability to exist in harmony within a piece, and because of that mentality I find myself unintimidated by errors that may occur. Simon once said, 'It's only a play', and he's right, because it liberates you from your well-placed intention to remain within the lines while painting a picture live for audiences. Instead, you do your job to the best of your ability, look after your colleagues as best you can, and go again the following day.

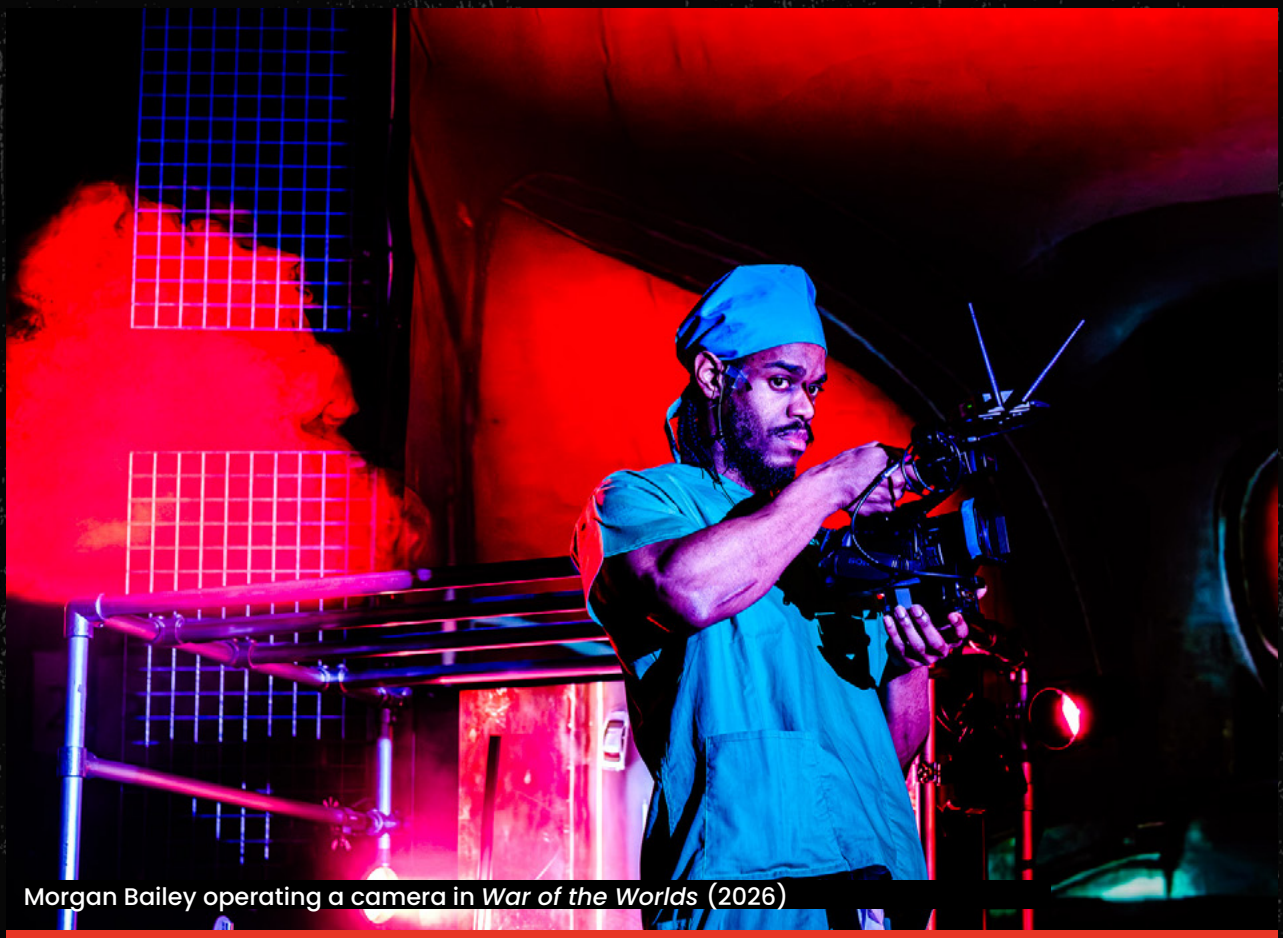
Acting for the lens

Being filmed live does change how you perform. Depending on the framing of the shot, your performance has to lend itself to complementing it appropriately. That's where your abilities and know-how as a screen actor come into play. How much room do I have to play in this particular frame? What's my eye-line? All of it becomes important in punctuating the live performance being filmed.

for students

The skill people underestimate

People underestimate the physicality required to complete a show like ITD's. These shows are no small feat in terms of what's required from you as a performer, but I'd also make a point of citing how important it is to understand cinema. Often I'd be asked how a shot could be made more interesting, and the answer's simple enough if you're partial to cinema's magic: what kind of shot, given the context of the scene, would really excite you as a viewer? What angle or frame would help draw out the performance required for this scene to blow an audience member away?



Morgan Bailey operating a camera in *War of the Worlds* (2026)

What it feels like from the inside

Understanding and respecting every facet of what's gone into bringing the piece to life is essential, because it's important to someone, somewhere, somehow. What I mean is that there's no one through-line for everyone to make it from start to finish. There are favourite moments and least favourite moments, and we latch onto what makes sense to us at any given moment in a bid to commit night after night. It is demanding work, so finding your peace within the piece while respecting and supporting others' is just as important.

A favourite moment

Ninety minutes alone on stage

It would have to be performing *All Blood Runs Red,* a 90-minute-long one-man play, as it was a true test of my endurance as a performer. It required all of me, and just me, on stage to complete it, and with it containing personal elements, that requirement reached much deeper. It was cathartic, and satisfied me in ways that nothing else truly has. That stands out and matters to me, because it partly came from me, and touched others in ways only I and it could. It's truly satisfying to witness your work provoke change in someone you don't know.



Morgan Bailey in *All Blood Runs Red* (2025)

glossary

Frame — The edges of what the camera sees. Everything inside it is on screen; everything outside it is invisible to the film audience.

Track — A performer's complete sequence of tasks through a show: entrances, costume changes, camera operation, prop moves, and everything they are responsible for, in order.

Eye-line — The direction a performer appears to be looking on camera, critical for making shots cut together believably.

Flow state — The state of complete absorption in a task, where complex physical work feels automatic.

› Try it yourself: The Camera as Character (Exercise 8) in Adaptation and imitating the dog: Practical Exercises (Section 4).

Published 2026 as part of imitating the dog's learning resources (Section 3: How We Make Work).

Photography of *Heart of Darkness, All Blood Runs Red* and *War of the Worlds*: Ed Waring.