

You look like a man who could push a cow over the moon

“We would like to invite you to audition to be a Ceremonies Volunteer Cast Performer” in February I received the invitation to audition to become a Ceremonies Volunteer Cast Performer and headed to Film City in Govan for a two hour audition on a damp Saturday afternoon at the beginning of March. What motivated me to do this was the opportunity to take part in something quite unique and out of my comfort zone, some would say a once in a lifetime opportunity. I really enjoyed the audition experience, which surprised me, and I decided if this was as far as I got then at least I gave it a go.

Fast forward to the end of April and “We are delighted to tell you that your application to become a Ceremonies Volunteer Cast Performer in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games has been successful!” So there we have it performing in both ceremonies, I was more than a little surprised. I quickly reviewed the rehearsal schedule and broke the news to my wife that the month of July was going to be very busy.

The first rehearsal took place on a Sunday morning at the end of June where we were informed of our role ‘Athlete Marshal’ as well as revealing our costume, an orange suit, yes an orange suit! We then moved to the permanent venue for all subsequent rehearsals, venues as well as what we were rehearsing was to remain a closely guarded secret to avoid spoiling the surprise. On the 15th of July we moved to Celtic Park, the venue for the Opening Ceremony and spent the next week perfecting our routine and performing in two dress rehearsals in front of increasing audiences made up of other commonwealth games volunteers, friends and family.



Rehearsing at a secret location

The day of the Opening Ceremony must have been one of the hottest days of the year so far, the atmosphere was electric and the thought of going out to perform in front of 40,000 people in Celtic Park and a billion on television certainly added to excitement.

"When this is over, remember you've done Thread the Needle in front of a billion people around the world. Job interviews, public speaking, you have nothing to be scared of anymore." *Steve Boyd, Director of Mass Choreography*



Thread the Needle, Glasgow Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony 2014, Celtic Park

Words can't really begin to explain the feelings felt during and after the performance, there was a sense of calm waiting to go onto the field of play, exhilaration during the performance after all we danced for quite a while. The exhilaration remained for some time after the performance it was great fun.

Three hundred of us were also involved with the Closing Ceremony so after a couple of days rest we were back to the secret venue for another week of rehearsals. We were introduced to the six hundred other cast members who were involved with the Closing Ceremony. This was very much a supporting role for the Athlete Marshals with different tasks and routines to learn, but an enjoyable one.



Presenting the chairs, Glasgow Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony 2014, Celtic Park

The day of the Closing Ceremony arrived and so did the rain, thankfully this did not last and it dried up nicely in time for the party to begin. Our main function during the Closing Ceremony was to look after the athletes and ensure that they had a good time. I had fun persuading athletes to go into tents and only come out when told to do so by Lulu. It was a great night of entertainment that the athletes enjoyed.



Closing Ceremony of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony 2014, Hampden Park

Almost two weeks later we got together for one last time to cheer on Team Scotland as they parade through the streets of Glasgow. This was yet another opportunity to enjoy the feel good factor that has been in evidence in Glasgow during the Commonwealth Games.



Warming up the crowds during the Team Scotland Athletes Parade

When I reflect back on this experience as well as the many new friendships that have been forged there is the realisation that if you set your mind to something, are patient and motivated the rewards are there for all to see, what a summer!

As for the title of this piece “You look like a man who could push a cow over the moon” this was what Steve Boyd said to me at the first audition, obviously a look he required.

Robert McKerlie
Ceremonies Cast Volunteer
Glasgow Commonwealth Games 2014



Fellow Dental School staff member Nail Nairn and I with some of my fellow Athlete Marshals at the Team Scotland Athletes Parade, 15 August 2014