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Alone, Together

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Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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ISBN: 978-1-61959-253-7

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“Commissioned and originally presented in June 2020 as part of the
University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Theater and Dance LAUNCH PAD Zoom
Festival *Alone, Together*; Risa Brainin, Artistic Director.”

Thank you to all the playwrights; directors; actors; designers; dramaturgs; artistic, production and administrative folks; donors; and audiences who have contributed to making LAUNCH PAD a vibrant home for new plays.

Foreword

On March 10, 2020, one week before the end of winter quarter, everyone in the University of California, Santa Barbara community received an email from Chancellor Henry Yang instructing us to move to online teaching as soon as possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The theatre/dance faculty immediately came together to figure out what to do to best serve the needs of our students. Final projects and upcoming productions had to be canceled, and students were heading home for the foreseeable future to take classes on Zoom from their childhood bedrooms! We were all thrown into a bit of chaos: how could we create a remote curriculum for all of our aspiring young artists?

It was at that point that my dear friend, festival co-director and head of the B.F.A. acting program, Annie Torsiglieri, had the vision to say: “Let’s commission playwrights to write monologues and plays that are meant to be performed on Zoom.” Well, I went a little crazy and invited every writer who has ever worked with our new play development program, LAUNCH PAD, over the past 15 years to participate. That was around 30 writers, and 24 answered the call! We gave the writers this prompt: *Alone, Together*. A total of 39 plays were written, 23 directors engaged, 61 actors cast, 5 stage managers, 3 designers, 3 dramaturgs and 10 staff assembled virtually, and, together, we created an all-day, live Zoom festival in four chapters on Saturday, June 6, 2020.

What we couldn’t anticipate is that not only would we be rehearsing during a global health pandemic but also in the midst of a revolution. George Floyd was murdered on Monday, May 25, and it reignited the cry against racism in our country. Our company was composed of students, faculty, staff and professional guest artists from across the country. Many were protesting by day and rehearsing by night. Even today, as I write this, the protests continue. It was important to both Annie and me that all of the artists involved in *Alone, Together* knew (and still know) that UCSB Department of Theater and Dance and LAUNCH PAD stand with our Black communities across the country on this day and every day. BLACK LIVES MATTER. We are with you.

As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in a famous letter from the Birmingham jail in 1963: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” We, as artists, are committed to speaking out against injustice.

Xochitl Clare, one of our actors, announced *Alone, Together* on her Facebook page by quoting performance and installation artist Ester Hernandez who said, “We must continue to use our creative skills to give strength to our political, cultural and spiritual struggle.”

Xochitl then continued with her own thoughts: “‘Is making theatre really important now?’ my heart asks. As a young Black artist, struggling to grapple with our world, channeling my energy towards my craft has provided me some solace. Support me as I move forward in virtual solidarity with fellow theatre artists across the nation to do a very simple, yet important thing—to *come together*.” And that’s exactly what we did on 6/6/20. With an audience of 800 people over the course of the day, we all came together.

As theatre-makers, we communicate through the art we create. The 39 plays in this collection reflect many perspectives on life during the early days of the quarantine. They brilliantly offer moments of joy, pathos, insight, hope and comfort knowing we are never really alone.

—Risa Brainin
Artistic Director, LAUNCH PAD

A Pandemic Romance Monologue

By

LILA ROSE KAPLAN

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(A PANDEMIC ROMANCE MONOLOGUE)

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A Pandemic Romance Monologue was commissioned and originally presented in June 2020 as part of the University of California, Santa Barbara, Department of Theater and Dance LAUNCH PAD Zoom Festival *Alone, Together*; Risa Brainin, Artistic Director. It was directed by Iris Skeen. Liz Engelman was the dramaturg.

CAST:

ROWANCatherine Ballantyne

A Pandemic Romance Monologue

CHARACTERS

ROWAN: Late 30s, any race.

(Doorbell.

ROWAN wears a Renaissance gown and holds a package.

The dress is red velvet, deeply cut, the works.

She does not look like someone who should be wearing a gown.

She looks too modern for the gown.)

ROWAN. My husband has a problem. He can't stop buying romance novels. They lie in stacks all over our bedroom. They snuggle together, making friction. They keep me up at night gazing at each other. There used to be books about statistics, but now there are British lady scientists who fall in love with other British lady scientists and do unspeakable things under all those skirts.

There's a pandemic outside. We should be making masks and worrying together. Also, we just moved into this house, and we should be unpacking. Instead, he's reading. Constantly. These romance novels are killing my marriage.

I wake up and I'm surrounded by true love, soulmates and happy endings. I'm from New York. We can't be happy. You people from California can be happy, but we can't. We can be busy or disgusted or funny, we can be bitterly funny. But you're not born in New York hoping for a happy ending. You might as well be dead. My husband suddenly wants to be happy. *(Little beat.)* What did he order now?

(She looks in the box. She inspects each book.)

(Reading titles.) Brazen and the Beast

It Takes Two to Tumble

And ... A Thief in the Nude.

How can I compete with a thief in the nude? Seems like she has a lot of time to be naked and steal paintings.

Did you know the French word for orgasm is *le petit mort*? It means the little death. It means you basically die for a few moments while having an