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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

Which Actually Isn't So New

By

MIA CHUNG

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(WHICH ACTUALLY ISN'T SO NEW)

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William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, LLC

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Which Actually Isn't So New 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 Kate Bergstrom.

CAST:

KAYKEY Xochitl Clare
EMILIA..... Roz Cornejo

AUTHOR'S NOTE

ac·tu·al·ly, adverb. 1. As the truth or facts of a situation; really; 2. Used to emphasize that something someone has said or done is surprising.

Which Actually Isn't So New

CHARACTERS

KAYKEY: A woman, any race.

EMILIA: A woman, any race.

(Two screens.

One with the username Kaykey shows an emptyish room. A really old printer. A collection of manila envelopes and empty boxes. And a few items of personal interest [trinkets, a postcard taped up, perhaps a dying cactus].

On the other screen: EMILIA waits. She sips a cup of tea. Scrolls through email on her phone.

Distant sounds of voices. EMILIA listens, increases the volume on her laptop. The distant sound of a door closing, muffling further sounds.

EMILIA checks her watch.

Note: The following actions are not visible to anyone but EMILIA:

EMILIA writes and revises a text. Then revises it again. She sends it off, then hits Leave Meeting. The pop-up “Do you want to leave this meeting?” appears on EMILIA’s screen.

Just as EMILIA is about to leave, KAYKEY appears on the screen and quickly sits at her laptop.)

KAYKEY. Sorry sorry sorry sorry—I just—I didn’t realize / I had left a—I had to run downstairs and then—

EMILIA. It’s OK.

Kaykey—

Kaykey, it’s OK.

(KAYKEY finds her phone and sees the text from EMILIA.)

KAYKEY. Oh my gawd, you were about to leave.

EMILIA. Is every/thing—

KAYKEY. I’m fine. Yes, sorry, I’m sorry, that was so rude of me, do you have to go? I’m so sorry.

EMILIA. I’m not sure if I / can—

KAYKEY. Oh, of course.

EMILIA. It's OK, but—

KAYKEY. I understand. I'm so sorry.

(A short beat.)

EMILIA. You were gone for a while.

(A beat. KAYKEY sorrowful and watchful, not sure what is going to happen.)

EMILIA *(cont'd)*. Let's just do a quick catch-up.

KAYKEY. Oh yes! We can make it really / really—

EMILIA. So how long have you guys been in Amherst?

KAYKEY. A few years now, let's see maybe like, oh wow, it's been *(Counting in her head.)* yeah, like two and a half, over a half actually, so like over two and a half years.

EMILIA. Wow.

KAYKEY. Yeah.

EMILIA. Do you like it?

KAYKEY. Yeah, it's great. We bought a house. It's small, but ...

It's a house. With a yard. A small yard. I wouldn't have time to take care of much more than a small yard. As it is, I don't really—hey, what about you? Do you still have your herb garden? In your window box? Where do you live now?

EMILIA. I'm still in DC. But in a different apartment. Sadly, I had to leave the window box in that apartment. That was actually two apartments ago.

KAYKEY. Oh wow, sorry, yeah, I'm horrible at keeping in touch.

EMILIA. It's me, too. I haven't reached out.

KAYKEY. No, but I'm worse. I'm the worst.

EMILIA. Oh, come on.

KAYKEY. We've just moving a lot and—

EMILIA. I hate this blame thing, let's not let that be—

KAYKEY. The ball was in my court. And I dropped the ball.

(A short beat.)

EMILIA. OK, fine, it's your fault.

KAYKEY. I'm sorry.

EMILIA. I'm just—oh my gawd, stop. Like immediately.

Otherwise we're not going to ever feel like talking / to—

KAYKEY. I always feel like talking to you!

EMILIA. No, but the guilt and the regret and the sorry, sorry, sorry—

KAYKEY. I forgot I had set a timer. The oven turns off automatically, but the timer goes off and keeps going off to make sure you—

EMILIA. You mean tonight? Are you talking about why you suddenly ran off?

KAYKEY. Yes—

EMILIA. But there was also—

KAYKEY. You probably can't hear it, but the timer is really loud and anyways.

Hey, I really loved that last article. The one on climate change.

EMILIA. I know. You emailed me. Thanks for reading.

KAYKEY. I read everything. It might take me a while, but I always clip them and read. What are you working on these days?

EMILIA. ...

KAYKEY. Oh, you're doing a whole series on climate change, that's right.

Did another piece come out yet? Did I miss it?

EMILIA. ...

KAYKEY. ...

EMILIA. Was that Rence?

KAYKEY. What?

EMILIA. Was that Rence earlier? That noise?

KAYKEY. What noise?

EMILIA. That loud bang.

KAYKEY. No, I think—

EMILIA. Sounded like a door—

KAYKEY. ...

I don't know.

I don't know what that was.

EMILIA. Kaykey

KAYKEY. Hey, are you still dating that guy?

EMILIA. No. I'm not seeing anyone right now.

KAYKEY. Good because he wasn't as smart as you.

EMILIA. That's not / why—

KAYKEY. He was nice, but you need someone smart. I might know a guy—
he's really great. A post-doc in Religious Studies, but he's not actually /
religious—

EMILIA. I'm not seeing anyone right now.

KAYKEY. Oh.

EMILIA. I like being alone.

KAYKEY. ...