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# Alone, Together

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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

# Neither Here Nor There

By  
ARLENE HUTTON

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*Neither Here Nor There* 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 Nicole Zahner. Eric Nightengale was the dramaturg.

CAST:

KATIE .....Hayley O’Toole  
ALEXANDRA.....Sheila Correa

AUTHOR’S NOTE

*Neither Here Nor There* is inspired by my own experiences, first as a student and later on the faculty of various colleges where I saw a wide disparity between wealthy undergrads and scholarship students. While living in a dorm can be a leveling experience, financial and cultural differences widen during school holidays and are all the more apparent when schools shut down in the middle of the semester. I always think that the way to talk about big issues is to tell a story about specific people. These two characters have a friendship that will not only survive secrets and betrayals, but because of living through an extraordinary time in history, they will remain close friends for the rest of their lives, finding a common ground of compromise that is neither here nor there, but someplace wonderful in between.

—Arlene Hutton

# Neither Here Nor There

## CHARACTERS

KATIE: 21, a junior at a small, exclusive liberal arts college in Florida.

ALEXANDRA: 21, her roommate since freshman year, also a college junior.

TIME: Sometime after spring break, April or May 2020.

PLACE: An online video session.

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*(KATIE and ALEXANDRA on separate video screens; both can be seen simultaneously. KATIE is in her childhood bedroom, Fox News heard from another room.)*

KATIE. Oh, my God, here you are!

ALEXANDRA. Hi, there! Finally!

KATIE. Oh, my God, your hair!

ALEXANDRA. I know.

*(A beat. Fox News is playing in the background.)*

KATIE *(calling off)*. Can somebody turn down the TV?

ALEXANDRA. Well, you look great.

KATIE *(calling off)*. Thanks! *(To ALEXANDRA.)* I missed your birthday.

ALEXANDRA. I haven't had cell service.

KATIE. Well, happy birthday. We haven't had internet—

ALEXANDRA. Me neither, until now.

KATIE. It feels like ages.

ALEXANDRA. Yeah.

KATIE. Everything's changed.

ALEXANDRA. Yeah.

KATIE. I miss you.

ALEXANDRA. I miss you, too.

KATIE. I'd thought I'd see you in a week. Who knew we weren't going to go back after spring break. I like didn't bring anything home from the dorm, have to wash my clothes like twice a week, unless I wear my sister's. You didn't even take your computer.

ALEXANDRA. I know. Thank goodness I packed my iPad.

KATIE. Oh! How was the cruise?

ALEXANDRA. It was ... my stepdad, my mom ... it's OK, wow, seems like it's been forever, it's been OK. How are you doing? Tell me everything. How's things in Florida?

KATIE. I'm OK, we're all here in the house on Anna Maria Island, I'm sharing my old bedroom with my sister and my cousin, it's like high school all over again, and with my grandmother and my aunt there's like seven of us.

ALEXANDRA. But you're right by that beautiful beach.

KATIE. Yeah, great, it's closed. And you know how small our house is. Like built in the fifties or sixties. Three bedrooms. One bathroom. My dad and my grandmother listen to Fox News all day. It's a nightmare.

ALEXANDRA. And everybody's healthy?

KATIE. Yup.

ALEXANDRA. So you're good.

KATIE. Same old spring break. Not like when you came to visit freshman year.

ALEXANDRA. That was a great spring break.

KATIE. It was. The best. You know, when you grow up by the beach, spring break is redundant. A few weeks ago, I was picking up as many waitress shifts as I could get, but now the bars are all closed. And the tips during spring break aren't nearly as good as during the Christmas holidays or even the summer. But oh, my gosh, you were on a cruise! A cruise! My mom and dad went on a cruise to the Bahamas for their twenty-fifth. My dad gained like ten pounds in four days. Are you at your dad's now in DC?

ALEXANDRA. I'm still with my mom and stepdad.

KATIE. I thought you didn't like your new stepdad.

ALEXANDRA. He's turning out OK.

KATIE. That's great.

ALEXANDRA. Maybe third time's the charm.

KATIE. 'Cause, I know your real dad's a nightmare.

ALEXANDRA. He wasn't so bad when I was younger.

*(Silence. Then, simultaneously.)*

KATIE. So— ALEXANDRA. Have you talked to—

*(They laugh.)*

KATIE. You go.

ALEXANDRA. No, you.

KATIE. Who have you talked to?

ALEXANDRA. Just you.

KATIE. What?

ALEXANDRA. We were kinda unplugged. We didn't even know much about the virus, not until we finally could get Wi-Fi again.

KATIE. We haven't had Wi-Fi either. It went down right after, and Brighthouse won't send anyone out. I think my mom forgot to send the payment, or the mail was late. Anyway Mom called our neighbor, they're up north, and we're using theirs, but it's weak and drops out.

ALEXANDRA. That's terrible.

KATIE. My mom's home all day. The salon closed. And my dad's sitting around, he was laid off.

ALEXANDRA. I'm so sorry.

KATIE. Yeah. (*Silence*) I should tell you ...

ALEXANDRA. What?

KATIE. I don't think I can come back.

ALEXANDRA. Basically the semester's over anyway.

KATIE. I mean in the fall.

ALEXANDRA. It's our last year.

KATIE. Yeah. I know. I'm sorry.

ALEXANDRA. We're gonna finally have an apartment together. We've been planning this since we were freshmen.

KATIE. Maybe I need a gap year.

ALEXANDRA. Well, you're getting a gap semester now.

KATIE. I mean like for real. Like a full-time job.

ALEXANDRA. Are there even going to be any jobs?

KATIE. Wow. That's helpful.

ALEXANDRA. I didn't mean ... (*She stops.*)

KATIE. My dad says I don't need college.

ALEXANDRA. Your dad watches Fox News. Promise me. Promise you'll do everything it takes to finish your senior year. You're so close! We already put down a deposit on an apartment. We can make this work. I can help. I can take the bigger bedroom and pay more.

KATIE. I thought I should tell you sooner than later.

ALEXANDRA. Something will work out.

KATIE. I don't know what.

ALEXANDRA. Don't give up.