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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

Late Night Prayer

By

ANNE GARCÍA-ROMERO

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(LATE NIGHT PRAYER)

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Late Night Prayer 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 Daniel Andres Blanco.

CAST:

FELICIA ALVARADO Kerry Jacinto
LUIS GONZALEZ Daniel Andres Blanco

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Late Night Prayer continues a conversation I began with Risa Brainin and LAUNCH PAD in 2015 when we developed my play *Staging the Daffy Dame*, which UCSB produced in 2018. *Staging the Daffy Dame* explores a contemporary university theatre department that is producing *The Daffy Dame* (*La Dama Boba*), a 17th-century Spanish Golden Age comedy by Lope de Vega, which highlights the education of women and the transformational power of love. *Staging the Daffy Dame* aims to amplify these classical themes through a modern lens by focusing on Lupe, a Latina theatre professor, who directs this play while grappling with the plight of her DACA student actors. *Late Night Prayer* picks up where *Staging the Daffy Dame* leaves off, at the end of an academic year after Felicia and Luis have performed leading roles in *The Daffy Dame* and are now sheltering in place during the COVID-19 pandemic. In these difficult times, we are confronted daily with issues of survival: physical, psychological, economic, artistic and spiritual. Our undocumented students face all these issues as well as the vulnerability of their immigration status. *Late Night Prayer* explores how these two students search for hope and faith while facing an uncertain future.

—Anne García-Romero

Late Night Prayer

CHARACTERS

FELICIA ALVARADO: 20, university junior, student actor.

LUIS GONZALEZ: 21, university senior, student actor.

SETTING: Present. California suburbs.

NOTE: These characters are from my play *Staging the Daffy Dame*. Dialogue in italics ought to be spoken in Spanish.

(Lights rise on LUIS and FELICIA in the middle of a FaceTime call. They are each in their own bedrooms. It is late at night.)

LUIS. Where are you?

FELICIA. In her guest room.

LUIS. Is it weird?

FELICIA. *Lupe's* chill.

LUIS. Living with your professor has got to be a little weird.

FELICIA. I'm grateful.

LUIS. Yeah, when the dorms closed we all scattered.

FELICIA. I could have gone to stay with Evelyn and her family but that felt more weird.

LUIS. Evelyn's the best.

FELICIA. I know. I just thought that staying in town, with *Lupe*, in her guest room, would be better. It's quiet.

LUIS. I'm here with my three younger brothers and it is not quiet. Fighting for table space to do homework. Internet crashing.

FELICIA. How're your parents?

LUIS. Honestly? Scared. But they still have to go to work. At the supermarket. They come home at night and throw all their clothes in the washing machine in the garage.

FELICIA. Are you wearing your mask?

(LUIS suddenly puts on a colorful lucha libre-type mask.)

FELICIA (*cont'd*). Are you joking?

LUIS. What? You don't like my mask?

FELICIA. That cannot protect you from the virus and it's ridiculous ... even though it is funny.

(Luis takes off his lucha libre-type mask. He holds up a surgical-style cloth mask to his face.)

LUIS *(regarding the surgical-style mask)*. A man like me wearing a mask like this can be dicey.

FELICIA. Wear the mask. And gloves. Whenever you go to the store or wherever. Please.

LUIS. So you don't hate me?

FELICIA. I don't.

LUIS. I messed up so bad. I didn't mean to hurt you. I thought we could all talk about our DACA status together. The whole cast. Like a family.

FELICIA. I get it.

LUIS. Is that why you FaceTimed me? To tell me you forgive me?

FELICIA. Maybe. I also need your advice.

LUIS. Go for it.

FELICIA. I don't know if I can do this, *Luis*. *(Beat.)* It was hard enough to think about acting in the world before the virus hit ... a world where actors like you and me have to fight tooth and nail to find work ... a world where there is systemic racism that keeps actors of color out of mainstream theatres, films and TV shows ... a world where if there is a role, a spot, a place to work, then it goes to the actor who most clearly fits the Latinx slot ... and I don't ... my family is a mix ... of Spanish, Lebanese and Mexican cultures ... I don't have that traditional look.

(LUIS puts on his lucha libre-type mask again.)

LUIS. What about this look? *(As lucha libre wrestler.)* We're fighters, *Felicia*. *Luchadores*. We're gonna keep fighting.

(LUIS roars, a sotto-voce, late-night-and-people-are-sleeping kind of roar.)

LUIS *(cont'd)*. Rrrrrroooooaarr. *(Beat.)* Come on ...

(After some initial hesitation, FELICIA replicates the roar.)

FELICIA. Rrrrrroooooaarr.

LUIS. There's *la luchadora*.

(They sotto-voce roar together.)

FELICIA & LUIS. Rrrrrroooooaarr.