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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

The Shakespeare Section

By
LYNN ROSEN

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(THE SHAKESPEARE SECTION)

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The Shakespeare Section 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. It was designed by Kaede Kogo and Allison McSwain.

CAST:

STUDENT Matte Kranz

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The Shakespeare Section was inspired by, well, my life! Who hasn't pined away in a library, tussling internally about how to win over the AMAZING person you have a crush on? Who among us hasn't tried and failed to seem cool? But it's also inspired by my urgent need during the COVID-19 pandemic to play, to dream, to connect and to remember love, joy and new beginnings.

—Lynn Rosen

The Shakespeare Section

CHARACTERS

STUDENT: Man, woman or nonbinary. Feel free to change all pronouns to anything. Ideally 20s but can be any age.

PLACE: A library.

TIME: The present.

(STUDENT is at a desk pretending to read, but really he's gazing at the person he's in love with. Although this is an internal monologue delivered to the camera [or live audience]—i.e. to STUDENT's own subconscious—he's in a library and an outburst can be heard by the public, so he often tamps his passion down. But there are a few places where control gives way to passion, which then must be contained again. A swift pace is your friend. No need to rush, but this is stream of consciousness so, for the most part, let it flow. I suggest a few places where you speak directly to the camera/us, but feel free to play with that.)

STUDENT *(alternating between speaking to camera/us and speaking toward "her")*. There she is. Her hair is down. I like it down. I like it up. She's smart. Pink suits her. Sweaters suit her. Light and clouds and rain and shine suit her. She's at the circulation desk, she has the cutest piece of paper in her hand. The librarian is pointing her my way! I'm by "S" for Shakespeare. Does she like Shakespeare? I can like Shakespeare! I'm gonna talk to her this time. No more wussing out!

(An unseen person says "Shh!" offscreen/offstage.)

Sorry. *(To self again, quietly but intensely.)* Here she comes. I'm gonna be all "Shakespeare." Play it cool. Oh! She passes and her scent doth blanket me softly like a—like a—like a sigh of relief! What is her scent? Roses? Beach? A garden by the sea? Is that her dream place? Am I with her in that garden by the sea? Of course not, freak! She doesn't know you exist. You hide behind your *(Doing air quotes.)* "Lessons in Nutrition" textbook while she doth touch the spines of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, and that other really long one. Oh, that those spines were mine, and I could but feel her sea-salt skin