

ART IN THE TIME OF COVID-19 VIDEO TRANSCRIPTION

- As we navigate this sort of present moment, I think there's something extraordinary about recognizing that yes, we are all for probably the first time in recorded history, more or less preoccupied to a certain extent with the same thing. And I think that definitely has a profound impact on our futures together. However, I wanna be really careful of not universalizing this notion that we're all in it together, or we're all experiencing the same thing. The reality is injustice and systemic violence, colonialism, so on and so forth, means there are people who are particularly vulnerable in this moment for whom the choices to remain safe and to care for one another are not so easily made, for whom this is more than binge watching Netflix and a mild inconvenience. And I also want us to remember that the great majority of indigenous people are far more likely to die from this pandemic, and that that is situated within a context of disease and genocide and institutional violence that will mean that whatever interventions we design, and however our futures look like moving forward, indigenous peoples and indigenous frameworks need to be at the center of that. So I will stop here with the land acknowledgement, if you have questions, you can always reach out to me about it afterwards, I can share whatever resources or tools I have at my disposal with you. So today's conversation, I had it at the great pleasure of connecting with the organizers, and either panelists, in preparation for today. Folks have shared a lot of really wonderful things that they're up to, have shared a lot of really insightful thoughts, really generous and vulnerable reflections in that conversation, and I look forward to creating that kind of space again. To give us a sense of what everybody's up to at this particular moment, I'd love to invite our panelists, one by one, to share what they're working on. As they do so, they'll unmute their microphones and their cameras, and they'll give us a brief introduction of themselves, and a sort of a little bit of a look at what they've been doing at this present moment, so I'd like to begin with Julie. Julie, if you can join us, and share a bit about your work and yourself, that would be great.

- Thank you so much for having me, this is really such a pleasure and a privilege. So yes, my name is Julie Tepperman, I identify my artistic hyphens I guess would be playwright-actor-educator, and co-artistic leader of Convergence Theatre with Aaron Willis, who also is my husband, and we employ a two and a half year old and a three month old at the moment as our assistants, which has been interesting in this work from home situation. And we, as a company, since founding and establishing ourselves in 2006, we've been working in what I would describe as immersive or, you know, before that, site specific work, and that has been a very interesting challenge, in the face of this present moment, and so I'm pleased to talk to you, as we move on about two projects that were, is all under the umbrella of what we've called Converge Against Corona, one is our phone play cycle that just launched last week called the Corona Variations, and one is a community artist outreach program, matching artists and patrons, but I'll talk a little bit about an event called the COVID Commissions.

- Thank you so much, Julie, for sharing a bit about your work at this present moment, I think you're up to some exciting things, and we look forward to hearing more from you, in particular,

personally, I've been really intrigued about the conversations that we had around how do you translate the intimacy of your practice and your company in all these different ways, and what does that look like in the future for you, so we look forward to hearing more from you. I would love to, at this point, invite Nicholas to share a bit about what you're working on, up to and what you've been thinking through at this particular moment.

- Hi, I'm Nicholas Rose. Thank you, Rania. I'm a dancer with the National Ballet of Canada, I'm in the Corps de Ballet. I'm coming up on my two year anniversary of living in Canada, I'm originally from Florida, though I moved from New York City, dancing with the Dance Theatre of Harlem. During this time, it's been pretty interesting, but eye opening to say the least. I actually can't say anything negative in my personal life about what is happening, because like what was said earlier, there are people who are going through things far more difficult than us, and they have far more variables held against them that average people truly just don't, when it just comes to just having a roof over your head, these are things that I think we're all noticing, that we have taken for granted. So I think this is a humbling experience for all. During this time, I've actually taken a big chunk of my life, and dedicated it to focusing on my mental health, thus being able to help a lot of other people focus on their mental health too. Close friends, family members, and even distant people who have reached out to me through Instagram, and what's amazing is, before actually the quarantine happened, I was on a leave of absence from the company to focus on my health, and my grandfather passed away in December, my mom was in Florida, my brother and sister live on opposite sides of the country, and I thought, you know, I really feel like I need to get my mind right, 'cause everything seemed a bit cloudy, and it just seemed like a great time to work on myself. And I developed this love for writing, I had no idea that I even had. It's interesting when you grow up, you're being told that you can't do certain things, you agree to it, and then you actually do everything in your power to ensure that you can't do it. And so, I've been breaking all of these falsehoods about myself and, learning new languages, I'm taking Spanish. It's pretty awesome. No, but at the end of the day, it's really what you do with your time. During this period, I've gotten really into self-administered EMDR. When I was in Florida, I had an in-person psychotherapist that I worked with, and for those who don't know, EMDR is eye movement desensitization reprogramming. It was, there was a study developed in the 90's by French scientists, I believe, having to do with the REM sleep eye moving pattern, where your eyes actually go side to side at the deepest part of your sleep, so when you can process the most information from the day before, so it basically gives you an opportunity to process things that have happened in your life, and clears up your present day. So that really helped me with a lot of trauma that I've experienced, whether it be in the dance world and my personal life, and since then, I've actually just been on this total quest to just learning more about myself. One little thing that I love to do, I have little sticky notes that are really encouraging letters, words. And every little sticky note is a different color, and I have things like, you know, someone's watching over you, you're not in danger, 'cause I feel like when we're in one place for so long we feel like someone's coming to get us or something. 'Cause it's true, it happens, you know, and there's another one that says, if the plan that you, if you plant the seed today, you're not going to see the fruit today. So that has also helped me, just gauging my time

wisely, and knowing that everything that I'm trying to work on right now, it won't come into fruition tomorrow, but you know, it will eventually, and this is a great time. Use this time wisely. You can take a class, stretching. Yeah.

- So much, Nicholas. I'm really excited to dive deeper into conversation with you, particularly around wellness and how the ways that you've been thinking around your own well being have also enabled you to connect with the broader community and define that sort of connection, closeness, and in digital spaces, and I'm also super looking forward to hearing about all the multi-disciplinary art projects that you've undertaken in this moment. All the different aspects of your identity as an artist, so thank you much for that introduction.

- Thank you. Thank you, I'm muting myself.

- Thank you, at this point, I'd love to invite Nick to share with us a bit of background on their work, and their practice as an artist, and what they're doing at this present moment.

- Hi, thank you for the intro. And thank you all so much for having me on here, and giving me a reason to change out of the same Adidas hoodie that I've been wearing for six straight days, so I appreciate it. Yeah, so my name is Nick Green, I use he/him and they/them pronouns, and I am a playwright that lives in Toronto, I'm also the creator of the Social Distancing Festival, which is a website that's been around now for about five, going on six weeks, that features, showcases the work of artists who have had artistic work canceled, delayed, postponed, or otherwise disrupted due to the need for distancing, and the spread of COVID. And it has been a wild, wild ride. It started the day that I learned that a musical I was co-writing with composer Kevin Wong was being canceled at the end of our first week of rehearsal, and it was born out of a need to find a way to connect with community and have an artistic outlet for work that would keep me creative and out of the dark place that I know I can go to. So it's been really cool, it's picked up a lot of momentum around the world, we have posts from many different disciplines of art, from cities everywhere, we have a livestream directory that we update every day, mostly featuring independent artists. And we've just started a new project, which is launching this time next week, called long distance art, where I've paired up artists of different disciplines in different cities around the world, with the task of collaborating on a new piece of work, interdisciplinary, artistic work that sort of speaks to the times that we're in. And they aren't all totally done yet, but I've seen elements of all of them, and they are so, so cool. I really, really can't wait to put that out to the world.

- Thank you so much, Nick, I think, I'm really excited to sort of really understand the international impact, and the ways in which we're now rethinking what's possible for us as collaborators and as artists, and what our communities mean when we don't have access to our traditional spaces, our physical spaces. So I would love, love, love to use that as a pivot in a moment to ask folks how they're thinking about connecting, how they're finding the spaces to collaborate, how we're finding closeness and intimacy in all of the extraordinary things that are practiced as artists

typically affords us, so Nick, if I can get you to carry on with that, and spark the conversation for us.

- Yeah, sure. I think that we're in a really interesting time for artistic collaboration. First of all, the artists in my community, who are next door to me, or down the road, are in a way just as close to me as artists in other cities around the world, you know, I'm not, I'm going out of my place for exercise, occasionally, and essential trips, but otherwise, I'm home. So the new friends and artists I'm meeting through this site are in a lot of ways just as close by, and what I've seen in the long distance art series is some artists who, I don't think would have connected otherwise, finding really, really interesting topics to explore artistically, so for instance, there was a textile artist in Calgary named Simone Saunders who is collaborating with a multimedia design artist in Colorado, sorry, Cleveland, named Takiki Walker, and both of these artists are, identify as black women, and they have embarked on a collaboration that is inspired by a Washington Post article about these black men who were run out of a Walmart for wearing masks, and in their collaboration, they talk about the experience of racialized people at the time of COVID across borders, where they can discuss different sort of geographically based experiences of racism in the time of a pandemic, but also really come together on how to present that artistically in a way that they wouldn't have been able to do without focused time to sit and meet other artists through digital means. So I think it's, there are a lot of really interesting opportunities to deepen political and artistic discussions that I don't know we would be engaging in in the same way if it weren't for the context that we're living in.

- Thank you so much for sharing that, I think it's been really interesting to think about how our concept of space have, you know, drastically changed what's distanced them, right? And what we thought, where we thought we didn't have shared experiences or shared frames of reference of people in all kinds of places, we're finding the ability to connect with that. I actually want to ask Nicholas about this, because I think you've taken sort of an intimate, interpersonal approach to this, and I know that some of your work has looked at really being able to share what your experiences are, as a black man in ballet, so I'd love for you to just speak to us about that, and because I think Nick brought up the intersections of who artists are in their lives and in their bodies and in their experiences so aptly, and I'd love to hear your insight on that.

- Yeah, you want to know something that I actually had the realization? It's really important that you do not put your external identification matched with who you are on the inside. It will actually ruin everything. I'm really serious about that. I'll get into that right now. And I'll tell you. So growing up in Florida, being black and gay at the same time, that isn't necessarily, it's not widely accepted. It's never actually, I've never actually been mad at myself about my sexuality, and both of my parents have never been mad at me about my sexuality. So that's always been nice, but when you're in school, people are absolutely cruel. So through time, I just felt that there has been a lot of mindsets that I really didn't feel, up until I was having to be in a public setting. When I would be doing dance alone in my house, I was feeling I would get more out of it than being in a classroom with a teacher that is telling you you're not gonna be able to do this

because you're black, or they will say it in a covert fashion, because just like there's racism in Canada that's covert, there's racism in Florida that is extremely extroverted, and very covert, so I mean, the covert racism that I experienced was, oh, I feel that you should just do modern, because there's more of a likelihood you'll get a job, than if you do ballet. My response has always been, no, I've never been interested in modern, I've always liked ballet, because mind you, I started cello when I was seven, so my whole life has been centered around classical music, and so ballet was just the ultimate opposite of that, is not just playing it, being able to dance to the music. And I just really couldn't comprehend at the time, why did they keep saying no? Why did they keep holding me back? I didn't even realize until years later, I mean, you go to, you basically develop this mindset that you can't achieve this because of the color of your skin. And if you do achieve something, they literally tell you, you only got that because of the color of your skin. So damned if you do, damned if you don't, okay? And I remember, I would be bullied not only by students, but parents, would call the school complaining, why are you gonna let him into the school for double major, because I was the first person to double major for ballet and music at my middle school in Florida, and so many parents were infuriated. Why is it that you can let him do that? It's because he's black? Dah-da-da-da-dah. So I was actually taking on their poison as my own, and it totally almost mutilated my entire mindset. And up until recently, I had to completely dispel the fact that I only have this job because I'm black, or I am only a good dancer at this level because I'm black. I actually am, I have this job because I work hard and I have excellent ballet technique. That actually has nothing to do with the color of my skin, because there are people who are just as capable as me, as I am, who are not doing anything, simply because they didn't believe. And then there are also people who are more capable than me, way more capable than me, who are not doing something simply because they didn't believe. So you know, really it's to do, you have to really focus on yourself, and know that if you, I was able to detach who I thought I was and what I went through from my childhood, I had to literally detach it, and then I was able to do that, so much liberation, and such a sense of self restoration came over my body, and one thing I was working with my therapist on was when you're able to focus on just self restoration, your need for reconciliation depletes to nothing. I had no need to want to say, you are racist, dah-da-da-da-dah! When I was back in Florida, actually, I went to the very middle school that tore me down mentally, and I taught class for all those level one students, because they put all the people of color in level one, the lowest level, and they gave us more modern than ballet classes, so I was deprived of ballet. Can you speak on how that enabled you to connect with people at the time of COVID? Oh wow, yeah, that's amazing. Because honestly, the healing process of this has gotten me into reaching out to a lot of my friends who have also gone through trauma in their dance life, and how it's affected them. I have a lot of friends who I grew up in boarding school with that literally do not dance, or quit abruptly, simply because their brain couldn't take it anymore, and I've been reaching out to my friends, and I've been telling them about this amazing therapy that I'm doing, EMDR, and that has been a life changing thing. And when I tell you that, the trauma in my life that I've experienced, it just, the emot, basically when you do your, the bilateral motion, and you provide a conscious thought of trauma, and you bring it to your frontal cortex, when you're able to actually make justified decisions versus it being stuck in the back of your critter brain area, you're able to seriously see that everything is

almost warped, it's almost been warped. When people tell you things that you don't actually know knowledge about, you believe it, because children are so impressionable, and we have, it's actually shocking when you do these, when you do these patterns, a lot of things in your past come back up, and thus, being able to bring it out to the open, and I feel like I've just become a lot more transparent as a person, and being able to help people. And a lot of people have been reaching out to me about how I'm able to maintain my sanity in my apartment, and honestly, the answer to this is this, know that you're not alone, know that, even though we have different variables of intensity that we're dealing with, we all very much so need each other. I'm putting Post Its on my wall that tell me it's gonna be all right, you want to know why? Because it helps me, you know? It might not help somebody else, but it definitely helps me, just to be able to know that, oh, okay, I'm still in this, we're still doing this, I have my cello, we're doing classes, I'm doing, I'm working on putting together a nice cool down exercise for the essential workers at the hospital, the Children's Hospital, so at the end of their shifts, they can have a nice cool down and breathe and reflect on the day that they've had, so they can take time to appreciate themselves, because I know for a fact people like them are deprived of time for them to appreciate the hard work that they do, because they have no time. So this is the biggest honor I think I've ever gotten to do, and I'm able to do it in my back yard. So yeah, you don't have the building at the Four Seasons Center, but my heart is racing, right? So it's all right, it is.

- Thank you, thank you so much.

- [Nicholas] Thank you!

- I think it's, a lot of your experiences, you know, when you were speaking, I was like, yes, yes, yes, because you know-- I'm an interdisciplinary artist.

- And your beautiful land acknowledgement, by the way. I give the land acknowledgement at the National Ballet, so I have to, I pretty much am, it was amazing, it was beautiful.

- Thank you, thank you.

- [Nicholas] Yeah.

- Always a work in progress.

- [Nicholas] Yeah.

- I felt really deep gratitude for, really I related a lot to your experiences, also, I have a dance background, and I remember as a young dancer, you know, coming to competition, and automatically me being told, oh, you're here for hip hop, right? That was all--

- Oh! It's so damaging, right? It's so damaging.

- It is, absolutely, and I think so many of us artists, you know, spend a lot of time contending with other people's definitions of who we are as people, and also we are as artists, and what kind of work we're capable of producing. And I think right now, we're being afforded the space to have these conversations, and I really understand the life of the artist, and I know that for Julie, this moment has presented you with opportunities for connection personally as well as opportunities to be the sort of meeting place, and to be the connector for communities of artists, so can you speak to that?

- Yeah, it's been really surprising, the response wonderfully overwhelming, about, I've lost track of time, right? Three weeks ago, a month ago, I'm not sure anymore. I had kind of a creative manic episode over the course of a weekend where I had been coming off of the first week of childcare and navigating the work from home thing with my partner, and brewing this idea, and then put it out into the world, and within the first 24 hours, we had 50 artists on our roster. And it wasn't a call for submissions, there was no vetting, there was no need to send me a resume or anything like that, it was just basically the premise, which I will qualify, the premise we started with was, artists need work, audiences are humans, need art. I would qualify that by saying some artists need or want to be working and creating right now, and some people want art. I think the longer this goes on, the greater the desire for art consumption maybe away from screens might be, depending how long we're in this communal, global situation. But a lot of people responded to the call, and what was really heartening was, after the first couple days, to this moment, it's mainly people I don't know. Artists who are new to me from across the country and some into the States, which is really exciting, so my job has been to connect artists and patrons. We invited patrons to pay a minimum bid, to donate a minimum of \$75, \$50 will go directly to the artists to make them something. The other \$25 will go into the pool, the profit share pool for the actors involved in the phone play cycle, the Corona Variations. And a lot of people were giving way more than that, which was very heartening. And my job was to, I mean, I don't think of myself as a curator, but it was interesting, if I knew the artist or knew the patron, to try to make those connections, you know, sometimes the patron, mostly they were open to anything, but sometimes they were very specific, so once an artist could tell me what medium they wanted to work in, there was kind of that match making, they had about five days to a week to make it, and the most remarkable pieces have come in. We're in the process with our web designer, Colin Simmons, of trying to get a virtual gallery up in the next few weeks. So far we have 88 pieces that have been commissioned and artists that have been paid to do it, and matched with the patrons, and I have a waiting list of almost a hundred artists. I don't, and we're out of money, I mean, that's the thing that's always the thing, with self producing on a project by project basis, because the money, we raised \$12,000 in the first three weeks, and the bank account now is pretty much at zero, because all of the money went into the hands of the commissioned artists, and the rest of it went into the hands of, so far, the 12 actors who have participated in the first round of the Corona Variations. So now I find myself in a position to keep fundraising, and balance the challenge of that with fundraising for people who are new to me, which is amazing, and also fundraising for my own creative endeavor, so I could pay the people I have invited to

join me in the plays. You know, so it's really an interesting balance right now of my own personal fulfillment of writing these plays and bringing a team together, and then the responsibility that comes with that, in terms of the leadership of really taking care of people, taking care of the actors, taking care of the audience who buys a ticket for an actor to phone them from a blocked number straight to their home phone, like that's a huge kind of invitation towards intimacy, and a huge moment of consent between all parties. So there's a huge responsibility there, I find myself juggling, as well as the consent negotiation involved between the artists and the patrons, because both the artists and the patrons can choose to remain anonymous, they can choose to be connected via me to each other, many of them have begun emailing, or a visual artist, for instance, was commissioned to make something for, a painting based on a photograph of a couple's grandchildren, who they really missed, and they've maintained a kind of relationship, which was cool. So unexpected connections, for me personally, and that I'm witnessing evolve through the intimacy involved in both streams of these projects.

- Thank you so much, Julie, I know that for so many of us, we are navigating our collective well being, and navigating everything, from escapism to healing, to documentation, to just trying to articulate a lot of the grief that we're all feeling at this moment, a lot of the uncertainty, a lot of the fear, and a lot of maybe the excitement at what lies ahead for our future together. But I know that artists have been instrumental to my navigating that, and my own arts practice has been instrumental to that as well. But I also think, for so many of us, we have an opportunity at this moment to ask ourselves some really big questions about the role that art has in the world, about the value of art in the world, about what art making and what art spaces and what art institutions might look like in the future. And then what kind of leadership we can take around that. I know that both yourself and Nick had sort of thoughts around this, in terms of how do you keep doing this, what's your role in that? How do you present without gatekeeping? How do we connect without curating? How do we sort of exit a lot of the structures that we've been conditioned into? So I'd love to hear from people of, what are the questions that you're asking yourself right now, in your practice as an artist, and what are the things that you're learning about yourself, and you're learning about being an artist in the world? So I know, for example, for me, the nice reminder that I got during this moment is that I am an artist, with or without my play getting mounted, and I share with making in the feeling of, feeling deflated, and having really, and I don't think people really know particularly, I'm a little biased, because I too am a playwright, in terms of recognizing, or knowing intimately the work that goes into it, and knowing how long it takes before you can get to put something into production, and you know, and the hundreds and hundreds of hours of like, and the revisions, and the reworking, and the dramaturgy, and just the labor that goes into it, and then to have this structure around it sort of fall apart, and then to lose access to that space, so how is that changing your practice, what are the questions that you're asking yourself, and what do you think is possible for our future in the art world, I know I asked you all the big questions, back to back, but--

- Yeah, at a time when I'm still trying to figure out when I'm gonna be able to get my hair cut, you know, so like, what questions about the future, I'm always like, oh my gosh, my opinion on

that seems to be changing even more than daily, like hourly. You speak so accurately about the process of creating theater and being a playwright, I know Julie's a playwright as well, and it is, the amount of hours that goes into developing a show before it even has a chance to have an audience, and if you're fortunate enough that you have a production company, or a dramaturge, or anyone engaged in your development, there is an element of that, that is also about how to craft a show that's right for their audience, and it's an interesting process, because I, if I want to work with that company, then I should want their audience to like my show, because I'm one of their audience members, but you know, being a Canadian playwright isn't exactly a position of turning down work. Like, usually you're just like, whatever, I'll write for anybody. So something that's interesting about the online forum that I've been thinking a lot about is, it's a place where people come to your work, rather than you bringing your work to their home, right? So when a company is producing your work, there's a subscriber base there that has been going there, that's part of their tradition, part of their engagement in the arts, and has been for maybe even longer than you've been writing professionally, so there is almost a responsibility, and a process of bringing your work to them. The problem is, a lot of people get left behind in that, because those audiences represent a certain experience, a certain perspective, and so, if your voice is not one that organically fits with that audience, you might not have a chance to bring your work there. What I am priding myself on, and the work that's being done at Social Distancing Festival is, it represents a huge, huge diversity of voice and artistic expression, like right down to discipline, down to even within, we don't just do, you know, contemporary art, or modern art, or this, but even within that, you could break that down into the many different expressions of that type of, that specific type or niche of work. And so, really, I think that people are going on there, because they've seen a post, or they've heard of an artist who's being featured, and they know they like their work, but then they find themselves looking at the work of so many other people who practice in such a different way, and I feel like maybe even taking a chance, it might even be an opportunity where they're going, I had this all wrong. If this play had been out there, and I saw an ad for it in Now Magazine, I wouldn't have gone, because I wouldn't have even walked in the door, I wouldn't have bought that ticket, 'cause I don't think that's my thing. But now that it's here, positioned next to this thing that I did think is my thing, I'm gonna give it a chance, realize I like it, go down the rabbit hole of seeing what else this artist has done, what else the genre's all about, and it's very cool, I find it very exciting. I mean, I'm not gonna lie. There's also times where you see that thing you don't think you like, and you're like, yeah, I still don't like it, but like, you know, that happens. It's all worth it, in my opinion, because you might discover that thing that kind of blows open your perspective a little bit, or realize how much more you relate to that diverse or different voice that you initially thought, well, that artist has nothing to say to me, because I'm not the same as them, you know? Yeah.

- Okay, thank you. I think it's really interesting, the ways that we're, at this moment, have an opportunity to sort of challenge the cultural order, and to challenge the traditional gatekeepers, to challenge the sort of, we tend to think that in the art world, there's a neutral, objective, and righteous sifter that, through critical consensus, brings the best artwork to the top, right? Artwork that's objectively good. But in reality, that, you know, I know from my experience, that

my intersections, I'm a black woman who's an artist, my friend Kamal would say, being an artist, a black artist is a high privilege and a deep pain. So most often, you're sort of navigating the realities of your life, which you'll often get to use in your work, but at the same time, you're being limited by a lot of structures around you, your audience is always assumed to be a particular person, and that isn't necessarily who you're making your work for, that isn't necessarily the critical eye that you want to present your work to. So I definitely think we have an opportunity to find our audience, and I also think we're being presented with new challenges, right, in the ways in which we can, we can't just take it online, because what does that mean for accessibility, right? But also, what opportunities does that present for accessibility, how many creators and cultural producers who literally couldn't physically get into our buildings can we collaborate with now, and how can we make sure that we hold on to whatever progress we make in these times, so that our relationships, our connections, and our future collaborations in the after time don't go back to the ways that they were before. So I'd love to do, turn it over to Nicholas, and ask you, what are the questions that you're asking yourself now, what are the lessons that you're learning, what's possible for our future together?

- Well, first of all, it's interesting, this morning I was asking myself, you know, Nicholas, it feels as though you're, you want to go into several different directions, which is great. But haven't you always wondered what it's like to actually reflect, so we never really get time to actually reflect on much of anything, because we're constantly being pulled in different directions in our everyday lives, and as I've gotten so excited about learning new, different things about me, I think this is a great time to practice what reflection really is, and going back, and going over things again. So as I'm, with my therapy. Starting tonight, because I like to do my therapy at night, it helps me with my sleep, too. Get a better night's rest when you're able to get things off your chest. It really helps. So try to do that between six PM and later, you know? But I like to write a lot, and I'm trying to really ask myself those uncomfortable questions, and with that being said, to ask yourself those uncomfortable questions, you have to really go back in time, and figure out, hmm, was it really that things were happening to me, or was I actually making things happen to me, because that's the only kind of lifestyle that I knew? And so, then there came a point where, when you look back, you're like, oh wow! Reflection really shows how we do block some of our blessings, and it's amazing and empowering though, because then you're able to be so much more open to what's right in front of you, because then you don't want to repeat what you've seen in the past and experienced in the past. I was watching a, speaking of, you were mentioning Netflix documentaries, I was like, okay guilty. I was watching a documentary, I've just been watching animal documentaries, not anything with dialogue, actually, if it has dialogue, it's a Spanish TV show. I don't really watch anything with English, because it just kind of makes me, I feel bored. So it has to be about either, it has to be either foreign, or about animals. I'm actually about to foster some kittens soon, so ugh, anyways. I found that there was this really interesting quote that said, the only people, the only living organisms on the planet that can't learn from their mistakes after the first time are human beings. I just thought, that's hilarious, because it's true! Every animal learns the first time, because the next time they mess up, it'll usually cost them their life, or their family's lives. So I

thought that interesting. They don't really have that choice, and we really do. So I thought that really sparked something in my brain, okay, really take advantage of the fact that you can really learn from your mistakes, and yeah, I feel like animals have been really inspiring me lately. It's like, interesting, I'm looking at the squirrels, and as we noticed, they're all unbothered. We're the ones who are going crazy, right? A little bit crazy. The squirrels are living their best life, they're like, get out of my way. I'm living my life. Throw me bread!

- They're arrogant enough.

- They're just living! They're loving it, you know? And I'm like, you know what? I'm getting inspired by these squirrels, because they're so present. They keep it moving, they don't stop and ponder, they just keep it moving, and they're jumping off of the trees and all that, I mean, I wish I could jump off of trees. Can't win it all, can you?

- Thank you so much for that, Nicholas. I think nature has been also a huge point of connection for me. I think you did a wonderful at this moment to recognize, it feels like everything has been upended, and because-- you learn the lesson that life splinters forward always, whether or not you were part of it. I mean, that's been really extraordinary, as difficult as it's been, as many real barriers as there are being generated for me, and far more for other people, by this particular moment, that's been the sort of ever present guarding lessons, that after learning about people, and myself, which is, you know, the first thing is that, when we're not thriving in our practice, we should ask ourselves the same questions that we ask when we're growing something is, what's wrong with the plan, but what's wrong with its environment, and how can we transform that.

- That's so true.

- And then the second thing that so often we tend to measure ourselves by these things like, here are these things that I need to do, that-- manifesting in, how were they not, you know, transforming? The reality is, things take time to blossom, A, and everything blooms in a season, and then the final garden lesson is that sometimes you're growing passively, and now that you have a moment of self reflection, you get to learn how much you've grown as an artist in your practice, how much you've sped up and devalue and appreciate yourself, because more blooms in the garden than the gardener planted. And so, I think that's the moment of allowing ourselves to take a deep breath and be grateful for who we are as artists, outside of whether or not we're able to produce in this particular moment, because I think there's also tremendous pressure to like, now you have the time to create the art, and it's like, now I have the time, but I don't have-- And I really-- Now I have the time, the time, but I'm momming 24/7. I'm literally at home, trying to do supervision and giving out 500 snacks, that's what I'm doing right--

- [Nicholas] Oh man.

- That's the, so the reality is, re-remembering that the artist has a full, full life, and I know Julie, you've got a full life going on.

- [Nicholas] Full life.

- Right now, and you're also, you know, thinking through your practice as an artist, and I think often we, in our heads, when we imagine the artist, we don't imagine the artist as a parent or caregiver. And particularly, that's a pretty gendered imagination, and therefore, the spaces we make for artists are not always conducive to that, so I want to ask you, what's possible in our future together, what are you asking yourself at this particular moment?

- It's interesting, yeah, I'm glad you bring up the artist as parent, the parent artist thing, because I've, I mean, I'm not on any social media, so I honestly don't know what conversations are going on right now in that realm, I know what conversations I'm having personally with my friends who are also in the artist-parent situation, and what's become so clear is that, the supports all of us worked hard to get in place, and in particular, the support of family, though they might be there, you know, emotionally, and just a phone call, or a Zoom call away, physically, we've lost our babysitters, we've lost our, I mean, we're so fortunate to be part of a subsidized city of Toronto daycare program, and we've lost that. But also, it makes me think about the moments, you know, before we were in a subsidized daycare situation, where we were bringing our first daughter, before we had two of 'em, to rehearsals, and she was being passed around, held by a lot of people, and kind of growing up dancing to the music that was in the room being rehearsed or whatever, and how for our second child, it's gonna be a very different next couple of years, however long this goes on, so how do we, through the art that we're practicing, and bringing into our home on a personal level, how do we bring our children and community home? Because so much of the work, I'm just recognizing how so much of the work was happening, because a playwright, it's always in a way, for a certain amount of time in isolation, you know, you know, at your computer, alone, or writing the grants to try to fund yourself to be able to keep going with the work, or finding other creative ways to subsidize yourself. And the time, I always say, the time spent, and I feel this as a producer, also making the work happen, creatively, versus making the actual work, being in the rehearsal hall, so to speak, with other people, that balance is way off. But now, every single inch of my living space is also the creation space, in a way that I've had to bring people in, and then, I mean, I'm kind of transitioning, that's, you know, a challenge. We all know, if you're navigating family, that's just a complete challenge, and I feel like I'm always neglecting someone or something. I continue to be super obsessed with the kind of premise of our company, or how the curiosity, now, that began us, which was pushing the boundaries of intimacy between the performers, the audience, and the space that we're in, and now, it's been really fascinating, just we've only done six trials of it, but having an actor, or two actors sometimes self isolating together, call from a blocked number, a single patron, knowing that they're the only person on the line, unless they actually choose to add someone to the call, and we've heard of some parties that have been happening, some multiple adding, which was really cool, as well as just some individuals doing the experience on their own, and I think there's

something super intimate about this moment in time. Some people, I mean, we only know how well it goes based on the feedback that we get, and some people have articulated that they found it wonderfully cathartic, other people really found the voyeurism of the interactive, we have a number of pieces, you're just kind of a fly on the wall, so to speak, and you're just listening, and in other ones, you're interacting, you get a script in advance, or there's a moment of improv. And people found that really freeing, a kind of escape from the current moment, other people reflected on the catharsis felt by dropping into someone else's grief, anxiety, or pain for a moment, so I think we're really, we've learned this week just as a company of artists putting on these shows, what it means to put something out into the world, and also really quickly, so just to finish, to speak with what Nick was talking about, the endless workshopping, and also, thinking about past systems, as you mentioned, Rania, the granting, you know, for us we're on project grants, not operating, so twice a year, we get an opportunity to apply for grants for our projects. There's a four month waiting period, you know, whether we find out if we have the funding or not, and that only makes up a very small part of our pie, box office only makes up a very small part of our pie. So there are lots of other things we need to do that takes usually at least minimum two years to make, to put a project out there, so that's been a really interesting observation to have plays that are a week old, that have had 90 minutes of rehearsal, being put out into the world for public consumption, feels very terrifying and vulnerable, but also, it's very in response to this moment. And there's no funding, there are no grants at the moment, or very few, there are popping up, and I'm sure that we'll start to see more opportunities for artists to apply for funding, for work that responds to this current moment, as it is ever evolving, but at the moment, we're just putting stuff out, and relying very heavily on patronage. So that's another thing I'm thinking about, we talk about the gatekeepers, there's so many artist driven companies in this country, across the city and across the country, who exist maybe not, because I know certainly for us, we never wanted to run a business. That was kind of the result of putting out work again and again, and building a kind of, dare I say, brand, certainly building an audience, very slowly over time, through very, often very personal, intimate connections with the audience, again and again. So suddenly we find ourselves responsible and enjoying the position of leadership to be offering people work and to be paying people, but then the gatekeepers of the funding, is a whole other thing. So will, I don't know in this moment, will people who have disposable income, or funds they would normally be spending on tickets to go and gather in a space, it'll be really interesting to see where people decide to put their own money. Into the hands of artists, as opposed to into institutions or buildings, et cetera, so I don't know, we're in a really interesting moment of change that, though I wish the circumstances of the world were different, obviously, I think there's something, dare I say, exciting, but certainly vital and necessary about some changes that I think need to be happening, and a lot of reassessing in the community. I hate to speak broadly, I can only speak from my experience, but I just, yeah, it's an interesting moment of change right now, that I feel I'm constantly navigating.

- Thank you so much for your insights, Julie. I think there's been a lot of things that you've said that have connected with a number of points that both Nick and Nicholas made. For me, there's a lot of things that I've picked up on, from all of the extraordinary contributions you've all made,

predominantly it's been really, getting the space to reclaim our power as artists, and as people, and to really redefine for ourselves how we want to work, what is possible for us, it's challenging our imaginations, it's challenging our resources, it's challenging our capacities, because we are being presented with a world that is vastly different than the world that many of us have now. However, the reality is for some artists, this has always been the ways that they've connected with the world, the ways that they've created, the ways that they've been forced to find community where there hasn't been that access for them, where they already are. I also think it's been really interesting to think about, at this point, artists are remembering themselves outside of capitalism and outside of scarcity, and outside of having to fight for resources, and reminding ourselves that we are philosophers, we are revolutionaries, we're historians, we're healers, and at this particular moment, we're enabling people to do a number of things, which is to document their present moments, and I also think it's been transcending what we think of as art, and what is possible within particular mediums or forms, and largely, that's been, part of it has been as a result of international collaboration, like Nick and the Social Distance Festival are being able to facilitate for people. That, I think, has enabled us to think that there's different ways of knowing and being, that what we might think of as classical music in a particular frame of reference, someone else is not thinking of in that way. You know, I get the opportunity to teach in a number of arts programs, I teach at, I spent some time at the Vance Center teaching in Ensemble of Allusion, which is a music program, and in that program, it's really interesting to think about you bringing some of these people, who are all contemporary classical musicians, people working in new music, and from different places in the world, where I say classical music, I literally mean Sudanese classical music, and then people will say, well, why don't you say folk music? And I'm like, well, it's the oldest civilization in the world, dare I say my music is more classical? So pivot on your frame of reference a little bit. So I think we've had an opportunity to engage in that, and to like, to poke what we've always assumed was just inevitable, or rational, or common sensical, and I think that's been really interesting, and that's enabled us to think about like, no, you don't need to give a funding body 500 pages of evidence in order to get your work presented, you can literally write something in three days, and rehearse it for a week, and present it as something imperfect to an audience of one, and I think that's been really interesting, we've gotten the opportunity to pivot on a lot of the things that we're thinking through, and also to think about, how do we support each other in those really practical ways that I know Julie's thinking through in terms of fundraising, and Nick is thinking through from that lens as well, and that we're all collectively thinking through from being there for each other's, our own well being, our mental health, but that of other people, and our communities, and people who share experiences with us, so I've also been seeing a lot of pivots from institutions towards protecting institutions, and I mean, that's the way the system functions, right? So institutions are pivoting towards keeping themselves operational as organizations, and I think the life of the artist is very much been absent from many interventions that we're seeing, so my question is, how do we care for ourselves and each other as artists, not only in this particular moment, but in our future together? How can we think through things that really care for the well being of artists, and that take into account who the artist is, and recognize that that isn't divorced from the art, and that, you know, artists have the responsibility to make us feel something, and that that something

doesn't have to be beautiful or comfortable, and that we need to create the kind of world that supports artists in doing that, and that doesn't see so many of us struggling, despite our impact being, you know, undeniable. So Nick, you want to--

- Yeah, let me jump in, just because I saw a question in our Q and A from Marjorie Tukesbury, but that really pulled at my, something I've been thinking about a lot, and I think is so important, it's about emerging artists or new artists right now. I gotta say, I'm a huge fan of Hamilton, I'm a huge fan of Sondheim and, okay, I like Andrew Lloyd Weber a little bit. It's cool to see a live stream in their living room of like, this or that, or a breakdown of Broadway shows. But like, these established artists out there, as we're moving online, and they're unveiling themselves in different formats is cool, it's fandom, but we really, really, really have to make efforts to showcase emerging artists, and not just emerging mid-career. Right now, there is a terror amongst artists who have just had their first professional production, or second, or people who are on the cusp, or people who are graduating theater school, because they have some momentum, and they had some people who are a little bit interested, and they had that maybe contract coming up, and now it's gone, and I can speak for myself, I have all this work canceled, and there's a permanence, am I ever gonna get work again? So I think right now in our efforts, we have to, have to be focusing on showcasing work from emerging or early career artists, and whatever following or clout that we have, and I send this all the way out to Andrew Lloyd Weber, my bud, Andrew Lloyd Weber, sure, showcase your work, get people to your page, or whatever it is that you're doing, but then push the work of someone who doesn't have that audience, because I can tell you right now, they're terrified, they're broke, and they have a whole bunch of really good work that's not being seen right now. Rant over.

- Thank you so much, Nick, for your passionate contribution there, I think it's very real, a real fear for so many of us, that this moment may mean the end of our practice as artists, I think that's something that people have to contend with, and I don't think that's only for emerging or mid-career artists, who obviously have greater risks than professional, established, working artists, you know, Rhianna can record from her living room till the cows come home, and has resources to outlast all of us. So we'll be okay, right? They will be fine, their practice will thrive, they don't have the same risks that a lot of artists who are early in their career, or artists without institutional support, even if they've been practicing for a long time, because that's the reality of it, is for many artists from marginalized communities, doesn't matter how long your practice is, you're really very early seen in that realm of professional, or seen as of the same caliber as your counterparts who may be practicing more dominant cultural art forms, or who may even be in the same art form, or in the same discipline as you, so definitely, I think that that's a fear, but also, we have to think about collectively all of us, our shared ecosystem. We are in a shared arts and cultural ecosystem that at this point, because of the financial, dramatic intergenerational, racialized, gendered impact of this particular crisis we're all experiencing, there are a lot of artists who will never get to be artists. There are kids who are now currently in subsidized music programs, who have access to that music program, and a loaned instrument, who will not get access to that program, because that organization will cease to exist because there is no

capacity to facilitate instrument loans elsewhere, there isn't somebody who can do that advocacy for free anymore, so on and so forth, so I think that's something we have to contend with, the reality that caring for one another means caring for all of our futures together in every sense of the word. Because the reality is so many people who have the capacity to be extraordinary artists are no longer gonna see that as a viable option for them, even, I mean, we already live in a world that says you ain't gonna make it if you're an artist, or what is your real job, you know? Which I get constantly, which I'm like, legitimately people occasionally pay me the right things, like that's the whole shtick. So really being mindful of not framing art as something that we don't need, in this new and imagined world that's something that's frivolous or extra, so I turn that question to Nicholas, around how are we caring for ourselves and each other in this time and beyond.

- I feel like the best way to care for each other is knowing that there is light at the end of the tunnel, and if there's light at the end of the tunnel, we don't have to be running around in fear. I think that everything, that anger comes from fear, sadness comes from fear, all of these unwanted emotions stem from one thing, we're afraid. And I feel that the second that we realize that we're all kind of in that same mental boat, we don't have to be as afraid, and opening up conversations like this brings people together, because I mean, we're serving something way greater than ourselves, just the whole umbrella of art in general, we're like a mosaic. Each individual, every single one of us is so particularly special, and that means we each have an opportunity to touch a different type of group, you know, we all come from different backgrounds, and we all know people who may not have as much exposure to the arts as us, and so I feel like that's our own responsibility. Are you able to take the people that you know in your life who do not have exposure, and are you willing to use your time to donate it to someone else that's not yourself. And this is a great time to be selfless, honestly. I can tell you one thing, the days that I spend giving my time to other people are the days that I have more energy than the days that I tend, that I want to be selfish or lazy, I actually end up more tired when I'm like, you know what? Eff the world, dah-da-da-da-dah, you know, there are people who actually do want to hear from you, even though they don't always say it. Also, you have to let people know that you're around, too. You can't, people are not mind readers, and just because we are all on our cell phones, we assume that they're doing okay, but you don't actually know if they're doing okay. So I have been calling my friends randomly, two o'clock in the morning, hey, what's up, how's it going, how's your mental health? How's it going? Love you, what's up? FaceTime, let's go. I can't see your face. Talk to me. I'm like, gotta see your face, let's go, because people have gotten into this, I'm not seen, I'm not heard mindset, I feel, because we're all so, we feel like we're trapped, but we're really not. We're really not. If this was 1905, it would be something different. We are actually, even though there are difficult things happening in the world, we do have to acknowledge that the faith, I think, can be way stronger, just simply by calling someone who you didn't think that you'd be calling, or I don't know, this is a great time to break down your ego. Point blank, it's a great time to bust down your ego. Kill it. I've just been working on that. And from doing that, the amount of people that are falling into my life, who need help, and you're just like, wow, this is actually really easy to help people, so when you feel that, it's easy to

help somebody, you should probably do it, because odds are, it's not that it's gonna come back around for you immediately, but it provides you a sense of, okay, what has worked for me might work for somebody else, and it might save somebody's life. I've been recommending this EMDR to several people, and my brother, who lives in Brooklyn, he's an artist, talented painter, very talented, but everyone in his building, no one in his building has been able to afford rent. Everyone in his building is pretty much depressed too, because people are dying at an extremely large rate in New York, particularly in Brooklyn, it's like a Petri dish right now. And he was telling me, you know, the depression is absolutely real. The anxiety is absolutely real. You know, it's one thing to be an artist, but then it's another thing, like you said, to be an artist at the beginning of your career, and in New York City, you're either super making it, or you're super not. And I know what that's like, because I've been in New York City with a job, I've been in New York City without a job. I know what it's like to have to freelance, like yeah, I was in the National Ballet in Canada, but I also know what it's like to have to work \$12 an hour, four hours a day, just to try to pay my rent. So it, you really want to take the concept that everyone is going through it mentally, and I walked my brother through his first EMDR session yesterday, actually, and he, for the first time said, oh sorry, I'm stretching. Sorry, I don't care! Oh, this feels so great! Sorry, had to do it, oops! My, you know, he said for the first time ever, he feels like, I don't have to stand in my own way, so already, there's just improvement by just talking about ways to heal each other, I've never even heard my brother say that before. Or so, hey. One person at a time, that's all it takes. One little drop in the bucket. You can see the reflection of my foot in the, sorry. I've just, I'm sorry.

- Stretch it out, live your best life. Thank you so--

- All right! Thank you.

- Can we hear from you and your thoughts about how do we care for ourselves and each other in this moment and beyond?

- Sorry, you said me? I didn't hear. Yes, hi. In a way, I've been thinking, I'm still, I'm very inarticulate, I feel like, 'cause I'm very in it, like everyone else, just kind of discovering in this moment, and it's hard sometimes to put the right words to the sensations. I do feel like in particular, well, to every artist, this is the ongoing task, certainly to people new to this field, trying to make a go of it, is always forever be looking at, who's in your circles, and sometimes we feel like, when I go into a teaching institution, for instance, with my producer hat on, and I'm talking about self-producing and putting your own work out there, people often will say, but I don't know anyone, I don't have an audience, and how am I gonna fundraise? But starting with your circles, and literally, like we do an exercise where we draw circles, so there's you, who are your core collaborators. Who are then the people in that second rung, collaborators you bring in for a specific project, building out, who are the people you went to school with, who are the people you work with, you know? If you teach yoga, so the people connected to that yoga studio, if you teach children music, their parents, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And somehow, I

find just even in the time before this moment of COVID, the exercise of just committing that to paper, for instance, or however you want to do it, drawing it, however you want to do it, makes already you realize, oh, okay, I'm not as alone as I thought, I actually do, if I put work out there, I do have people to direct it to, whether they're interested or bite, or not, it's a starting place, it's like a "yes, and" moment, and then the power of people to then advocate for you, and become your ambassador. One of the biggest lessons for us, as a company, in terms of building audience and our donor base has been through the community theater work we've done, just to give an example. By at first volunteering, and eventually being able to pay ourselves a small bit of money to run some community theater programs, or even in the moment, I've been running a play writing program for mostly seniors, just for free and for fun, giving them a weekly challenge, but the amount of people then they bring into that circle, by putting something out, you can only expand those circles, and I think that's all there is to do in this moment, if you have that inkling of who is out there, am I just shooting something into the dark, and then your focus, I think, at least I found my focus becomes more targeted based on whatever the creative impulse is. And also, I'll just say that most things are, as everyone's nodding, free ourselves of this notion that we need to reach everybody, or that our work is for everybody, you know? Me, the container of creating 10 minute phone plays for people who want to be on the phone, so that's already a pool of people, and we can only hit 10, eight or 10 people a night, it's like, there's a liberation in that, we're not trying to reach hundreds of people, there's a limitation in how much box office that we'll bring in, so we have to find other creative solutions to pay ourselves, but the one on one, don't underestimate the one on one connection in this moment, and where that can grow.

- Thank you so much, Julie. At this, I'll take this opportunity to transition us into our Q and A, because I think folks are asking a lot of relevant questions, I'm gonna direct some of these questions to a specific panelist, so that we can get a chance to answer as many of them as possible, so I think for this first question, I think I'd like to ask it to Nick. Nick, we have a question here from a participant who says that, do you think the majority of people you see engaging with arts and culture online now will continue to do so after social distancing ends, and to what degree? I know the future is this giant question mark, but let us know how you feel about it.

- Oh, I hope so. I think that we have a lot of artists who are engaging with online art right now, 'cause it, we already are in the practice of nourishing ourselves through art, for me it's like, it's a little like chicken soup. So I think we have that audience, but I think we are tapping into younger audiences, and I think we also probably don't get as much interaction from some of the folks who are subscribing to larger arts organizations, that's a big generalization, I'm sure there's lots of them who do check it out, but I think, speaking from the Social Distancing Festival, a lot of it is more independent, and sort of edgy in nature, and so, I think we're probably attracting a different crowd. I feel like part of that is the fact that it's less commitment in a way, it doesn't cost \$80 to check something out that you might not even like, or that you had one bad experience with in the past, and now you don't want to do it again. So I think we are getting people who are taking more of a chance with the art that they're engaging with, and I think we

do have a huge opportunity to transition that into when we're back enjoying a lot of these things live, learning how we were able to engage those people to get them to keep, you know, having that artistic practice of going and engaging with art. So maybe that means that it needs to be financially more accessible, or maybe that means that we need to be offering things with shorter runs and a bigger array of different people, more festival formats, I don't know. Good question, I think that's something that we're all gonna have to stew over a bit more.

- Thank you, Nick, I think it definitely brings up the question of who our audiences are, and also, how comfortable our audiences feel in the traditional spaces we've been presenting in. That's been a really interesting piece for me, is that, you know, there's often an assumption about, for example, about who goes to the ballet, right? And I think one of the ballets now on your Instagram, you see that actually, a lot of people go to the ballet, and they're not only the particular kind of people who make kind of donations to the company, who have their name written on the donors' wall, who come to every time The Nutcracker is presented. It's that, when the ballet is in my kitchen, my audience looks like a bunch of different people in their kitchens, and all of a sudden, I think it feels more accessible, or it feels like something that people can engage in, and I also think, you don't even know, I think you, you're stunned often about who your audiences are, and I participated in, there's an anthology that I wrote in, that is called The Breakbeat Poets, which comes out once every few years with a new iteration, and some of us who have written in the anthology had a phone in cipher, where most of us are rappers and poets, and somebody would literally give us a beat, and that was it, and so one of the people who called in, called into the phone-in cipher the most is an 84 year old guy who lives in Little Italy, who's been loving it, and he's like, I'm really getting into Nas, and I was like, all right! Get into Nas, Illmatic is something that should be part of everybody's music library, I think, you know? And today I was sending him an email about "New York State of Mind," I was like, I finally get to write an email with the subject heading, "I never sleep, 'cause sleep is the cousin of death," I get to use that, finally, me and Nas are on the same page. So I think it's really interesting to think about, how the ways that's been challenging us, and I think it's really interesting to think about who gets access to an exhibiting or presenting space, so that brings us to the next question, which I think I'm gonna direct to Julie. Julie, do you see this digital shift as a way for emerging, marginalized artists to get more space, and break through, or is it still a pretty much enclosed group or practice that's shifted into online?

- Yeah, absolutely, I do see it as an opportunity. I mean, even, I'm just looking on the screen now, I see 130 people participating right now in this panel, and I think about, okay, if we were doing this live in a space, what space would we be in, and okay, a back space of a theater usually holds, you know, max 100 if that, a main space, maybe 200, you know, there's the opportunity to reach more people on their own terms, in the kind of safety of their own space at the moment, and without having to put on clothes, or makeup or whatever, but also without, as Nick was saying, without that kind of commitment to even stay for the whole thing. And I think, you know, though we want people to stay and be engaged, the, it's a really interesting kind of incognito moment that, you know, you can, even Nick, you were saying earlier, testing out work that you normally

wouldn't take a risk on, also because of that, the effort it takes, and the money it might take to access it. So yeah, I think there's a lot of opportunity in this moment, and then how that will translate when things, I want to say, go back to normal, because I think there will always be a, who knows, but a new kind of normal, and what gathering means, and what, as you said earlier, what accessibility and consent means. We're gonna learn a lot. We're already learning a lot.

- Thank you so much, Julie, I really appreciated your insights, I think, definitely, there's extraordinary opportunities, but I think a lot of other questions that came up from the participants were questions around access to technology, and bridging that gap, I think we're learning in an increasingly digital world that access to tech, access tech literacy, and reliable internet access are basic needs, and they're no longer these luxuries, and we have to look at, how do we facilitate that access for everybody, so that we are not only replacing what we think of as cultural order gatekeepers with technical access gatekeepers. And I think that's new challenges, and we have the opportunity to think really deliberately and mindfully through these things, as we navigate what these changes mean to our practice, so Nicholas, there's a question here that was actually very particularly directed at you, which is, how have you dealt with this virtual situation as a dancer who's practice is body based?

- Oh, that's been a really-- I'm laughing because, you know, it really is like, how do you go from dancing with ceilings that are over 20 feet tall, to dancing with ceilings that are six feet tall? So firstly, I have decided to focus on everything that does not require me to be expansive in my movement. I've been able to focus on the basics of ballet. Everybody knows that when you start ballet, you start facing the bar. My countertop is the bar, so I'm actually doing great, because I'm deciding to just suspend what I think normal should be, because like I said, this can go into the whole falsehoods thing, suspending the falsehoods of us believing that in order to be ballet dancers, we have to be in a certain location, wearing a certain outfit, dancing to certain music. I give ballet classes to Brazilian funk music on Instagram, nothing to do with classical music at all, it has to do with musicality, strengthening of your muscles, and being aware of your soul, so you know, it doesn't have to even be so much about gymnastics, and I feel like that's what's forced us to kind of change, it's definitely forced us to change our perspective. It's become a lot less of modeling, and a lot more of, are you actually dancing? Because we don't have much space, and if you're just making poses, I mean, there's nothing more boring. Like to be quite honest with you, there's nothing more boring, and we all know, you know. So this has been a great opportunity for me to just work on small things, strengthening of my toes and my feet, doing stretching, finally I have time to stretch. Never really have time, because it's like, wake up, do performance, class in the morning, performance. Break, another night performance, go home at 11, sleep, wake up, class at 10. Six days a week, we know how this goes, so I feel that this is a great time to do all those little things that you say you're gonna do, oh yeah, Belinda, I can't wait, after my shiraz, I'm gonna do my lunges. You don't actually do them, you just have the shiraz, come on, I'm guilty. I know Nick Green's over there laughing, he's muted, yeah, I know.

- Oh!

- But you get my joke!

- I feel you, I have an email chain I've sent to myself since 2016, full of writing prompts, right?

- I've been looking at my old writing prompts!

- It's a mythical time, right, of when we'll sit down and work through all of these writing prompts, so I definitely feel you on the opportunity here to remind ourselves that, for artists, the habit will sustain you more than talent, and that there's an opportunity--

- [Nicholas] Oh my God.

- Become more deeply disciplined in our practice, within what is obviously possible for us, and at these--

- Yeah.

- Moments, I know that we, I wish we had more time to engage with more of the questions that were sent in today, I think some of them were answered in the course of the discussion, at this point, I'd like to turn it back over to some of the wonderful organizers at Myseum so Nadine, thank you so much for having us today, and for making this space for all of us.

- Thank you Rania, I just really love to thank our panelists, Julie, Nicholas, Nick, and of course Rania, for lending your voices, your faces, to this conversation, and sharing your reflections, and really, and your vulnerability. And yeah, thank you for a wonderful conversation this afternoon, I'd like to thank our audience for joining us today, I'd love to encourage you to learn more about all of our panelists, we have their links online, please follow us, we'll also be sending out an email through the registration, so that you can find out more about the work that they're all doing. And I'd also finally like to invite you to our upcoming programs, we have the second part of the Art in the Time of COVID dialog next week with people from Club Quarantine, Manifesto, Rise, and the Urgent Music Festival, we also have a program this Saturday that looks to imagine the future of Chinatown through speculative storytelling, so please join us, and thank you all again for a wonderful hour and a half.

- Thank you so much.

- Bye, all.

- Thank you.