UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

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Jim Logan

The Lasting Encore

March 2020. The UC Santa Barbara campus was empty after moving to online instruction for spring quarter in response to the coronavirus pandemic. How in the world would the Department of Theater and Dance make it possible for students to perform if everyone was home?

The answer was "Alone, Together," a collection of 39 Zoom-friendly short plays and monologues written by a stellar group of 24 playwrights and commissioned by UCSB's acclaimed new-play development program, LAUNCH PAD. The pioneering works, the brainchild of LAUNCH PAD Artistic Director Risa Brainin and BFA Actor Training Program Director Anne Torsiglieri, premiered June 6 in an all-day live festival over Zoom.

The performances, with more than 110 actors, directors and writers, was a hit. Now, the encore: "Alone, Together" (Dramatic Publishing, 2020). The book should be an invaluable resource for theater groups across the nation, Brainin said.

"We are honored that Dramatic Publishing partnered with us to make the collection available quickly," she said. "Our goal is to be of service to the field, both academic and professional, as we all continue to create online theater for our audiences. The plays range from comedy to pathos, with small to large casts. They can be performed in any order and any combination. For reference, we included the four 'chapters' that were performed in the festival.

“Dramatic Publishing has already licensed several of the plays,” Brainin continued. “I’m excited to see where these plays go over the next few months. And, once the pandemic is over, they can also be performed on stage. It’s a continuous quest for actors and directors to find quality short plays and monologues. This partnership with Dramatic Publishing makes the search that much easier.”

Christopher Sergel III, president of Dramatic Publishing, said, “We could not be more proud to offer this brand new collection, written at the onset of the current pandemic specifically for streaming production. These world-class writers have knocked it out of the park.”

After producing “Alone, Together” and several readings on Zoom, Brainin and the production team at UCSB plan to brainstorm with Zoom on how to make the platform more theater-friendly. “With most theaters and training programs staying remote for their fall seasons, now is the time to experiment with the form.”

“Alone, Together” was edited by William Davies King, a distinguished professor of theater and dance at UCSB, with a foreword by Brainin. It was written by Linda Alper, Katie Bender, Jami Brandli, Dan Castellaneta, Deb Lacusta, Leo Cabranes-Grant, Mia Chung, Yussef El Guindi, Anne García-Romero, Idris Goodwin, Enid Graham, Arlene Hutton, Lila Rose Kaplan, King, Jenny Mercein, Brian Otaño, Lynn Rosen, Cheri Steinkellner, James Still, Alison Tatlock, Annie Torsiglieri, John Walch, Cheryl L. West and Sheri Wilner.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.