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Working in Theatre

The Producers Panel: Then vs. Now

Friday, October 30, 2020

>> L.J.: Hello everyone and welcome to our weekly Working In Theatre Series webinar panel situation conversation. My name is L. J., I'm the founder and executive producer at Maroon Arts and Culture and I'm so excited to be here on this wonderful Friday afternoon talking to all of you wonderful participants about what it's like to realistically work in theatre. So excited about this partnership with Center Theatre Group and just a reminder, we also have open captioning available. The link should be in the chat. We just want to take a moment to thank the California Arts Council, a state agency, and the National Arts and Disability Center at the University of California Los Angeles for providing open captioning today. We stay in accessibility.

As you all know, I like to start off our weekly sessions by calling on an ancestor. Today I am going to call on my grandfather Bernard P. Jenkins. He's an engineer and he was, yeah, he's a person that made things. So I think that that's the perfect energy and spirit for me to bring into our conversation today as we discuss what it's like to be a producer, what does that even mean? What do producers do and most importantly, how do producers get paid?

Okay. All right. So first up joining us today is Patricia Garza, a person who I really love and admire. One of the first people that I first met when I started working at Center Theatre Group. So really she's mostly responsible for me even being here today, and next up we also have Leanna Keyes who I met over the summer working on a show. Again, really innovative, really pushing the envelope forward in terms of digital production. So we've got a lot of really interesting things to discuss today. I will let you all talk about yourselves for a little bit. Patricia, you want to go first?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Sure, just so honored to share the space with L. J. and Leanna and meet Leanna for the first time. So it's such an honor to share space on this lovely Friday. Yeah. Patricia Garza, they, them, she, hers. I'm actually currently working for Center Theatre Group as the Line Producer for Special Artistic Projects.

I have been at CTG over about a dozen years now going on a dozen years in different capacities, but most recently on the Artistic team as Line Producer. And I am going to be sadly transitioning out of CTG on Monday and I will be the Director of Programs and Engagement at the Network of Ensemble Theaters. So I will be working with Ensemble.

>> L.J.: Yay!

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah, and some current projects that I'm working on actually not to plug a plug, but Center Theatre Group is launching our Digital Stage tonight with 'Kristina Wong for Public Office' which I just produced with my colleague Keller, and that is directed by Diana and written by Kristina Wong. It's an amazing preelection piece to just laugh and be joyful, but also to activate.

And then after that, I produced which we will talk about probably a little bit later under very strict COVID protocols, ["The Greek Trilogy of Luis Alfaro"]. So we can talk a little bit about how that went down and that will be premiering in November in partnership with the Getty.

>> L.J.: Wonderful. Leanna, tell us a little bit about yourself.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Hi, I'm Leanna Keyes. I use she/her pronouns. I would like to start by recognizing and acknowledging that I'm on the historical homeland of the Chickasaw Nation, Memphis, and all of Tennessee where I live was the long established territory for many indigenous people prior to their forced removal.

L. J., I also want to call upon an ancestor. I love that. I am going to go a little in a convention here. A non-familial ancestor, Monica Roberts, who is a pioneering trans journalist who recently passed away and is a great source of inspiration to me. I want to call upon that and hold all of that truth. I'm the owner, founder of Transstreaming. I do fully live events, that's theatre performances. That's conferences, galas, fundraiser, all that sort of stuff.

My primary organizing principle in producing all of that content is to have things be fully live and also that they are artist forward rather than technology forward. I'm always about hearing what the artists need, what they want to be able to accomplish, and then finding the technological solutions that make that possible rather than going to an artist and say hey, I can throw you in some Brady Bunch squares on Zoom. You want to do that?

I'm not into that, I want to really push the envelope into a fully accessible world where things can be accessible both to people of different economic means, in different locations as well as in a, like, accessible to people who are disabled. So that is including captioning or audio descriptions or video on demand for people who can't sit through a whole thing.

All of these are part of my production process. I most recently wrapped up a production of 'Downtown Crossing' which is a play by David Valdez. That was done through Company 1 Theater in Boston. And it's the coolest thing I have ever done. I hope we can talk about that. For me that was pushing the envelope of what is possible in a digital world.

You know, I have been providing digitally for basically this whole year and made that decision very early on. So I have a big head start in terms of figuring out what, what, what doesn't, and how to make it happen.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I want to thank Leanna for making the land acknowledgement. I'm on indigenous land in Los Angeles. I'm [inaudible] Diane Rodriguez. I want to bring her into this space as well and this conversation. Thank you both for modeling that.

>> L.J.: Wonderful. Typically I'm on Tongva land in Southern California. But I'm in Michigan. If someone could drop the website where you can find out what ancestral land you are on, I will go look it up and bring it into the conversation. And I would also encourage all of our participants watching please join us in the chat. Tell us where you are joining us from and also if you would like to call on an ancestor today, as we discussed in the boot camp earlier this week, the practice of calling on ancestors, it's a cultural one.

Not everybody deals with death the same way. Some of us believe our ancestors are walking amongst us with us every day. And if there is one particular need that you have, you call on the ancestor that can help you with that the most and they will be right at your right side.

So if anyone in the chat wants to do that, I would love to hear who all you are calling on for strength today. And also thank you so much for bringing Diane Rodriguez into the conversation. I met her, like, once or twice, and it was an honor and a pleasure. And I just, yeah, I just, I'm so excited that you are wearing her scarf. That's so wonderful.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: It's very cozy.

>> L.J.: So let's jump into it. As you all can see, both of our panelists today are extremely passionate about their work, excited about the projects that they work on. So let's just talk about the definition of a producer. What does a producer do? I offered to produce my friend's podcast last week. She was, like, what exactly does that mean, you will be doing? And I was, like, um, so can you help fill us in on what a producer does? And what type of producer are you?

Patricia, you mentioned you are a Line Producer. What does that mean?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah, sure. I mean, right now I'm kind of doing a little bit of a hybrid Line Producer and full producing work on these film projects. But typically what it means in terms of line producing is it's really the logistics and administrative support of the production or the project that's moving forward. That could mean organizing the budget and the contracts of all of the—in tandem with of course general management in a more traditional regional theatre setting.

It could also range from securing and building the creative team depending on the project. So I do line producing for new plays, which I'm sure we will talk about the difference. But that's a whole other process versus, like, a production process, a full production process.

And then I also, the day of and throughout the rehearsal process, really make sure I'm checking in with the director and the creative team and meeting any needs they have and also being a connector back to the producing entity, in this case, Center Theater Group and making sure people know what's going on, so the creative team isn't building a vision that isn't in our budget or our scope.

And these new film projects I'm learning this host editing process which is very new to me and I have had to several times just say full transparency, I don't know what I'm doing right now. But I'm jumping in and I'm trying to help as much as possible. So that's a little bit of what I do on projects, everything from coordination and administration, creative and artistic content and helping that shape, and then whatever needs to happen on the post end, including wrap-up or debriefing, what did we learn, what can we do better did the artists feel like that was a successful process for them? And all of that.

So it's been really, it's never a dull day here at CTG for sure.

>> L.J.: Leanna, what kind of producer are you?

>> LEANNA KEYES: I'm a producer—other title to that, I'm not an executive director, not a line producer. Honestly I'm so glad that you talked about what a line producer is, because I was, like, I'm learning. I'm earning less than right now. Being specifically right now a digital producer if I had to give it a title.

I am learning a lot very quickly and also, you know, I'm part of an emerging field. There are certainly people who have created live stream content for decades now. But it's never really been considered viable by much of the theatrical industry. And so because we were forced to now really considering how do we bring genuinely live interesting content to folks at home.

And the liveness of it matters very, very much to me. As a digital producer, I think the impact and the connection in the specific theatricality of knowing something could go wrong. When you are producing a show on stage and an actor's microphone gives out or they have a prop malfunction on stage and they just have to power through it, the audience loves those moments because they are reminded that they are seeing a unique experience that day.

So as a producer, I lean into that. And, like, I will throw up, if I'm producing a live stream, I have a panic button I can press that will throw up a live theater moment in progress; please stand by overlay. And in the chat, the audience loves when that happens because they are, like, oh, my gosh, this is happening now. So much of my

duties as a producer, similar to what you said, Patricia, either I have to know how to do something or I have to be willing to know how to do it or I have to know someone who has that skill. Depending on the level of the organization or the partner that I'm working with, some of them will already have infrastructure in place.

Like, you know, particularly with theaters oftentimes they come with a lighting designer and they come with a scenic designer or someone who can do renderings if they can incorporate into a green screen like I'm doing now. But in other times, that's not within scope. So I had a client last, a couple of weeks ago who was, like, hey, our animation designer isn't going to work out.

I guess we are going to have to cut animations. I was, like, I am a visual artist. You want me to give this a try? They were, like, sure. Here is a list of a lot of things to animate. Can you do that? I was, like, not yet, but I will try.

>> L.J.: Give me a day!

>> LEANNA KEYES: I went from not having animated anything in my life to producing high-quality animations. Like, in two weeks, basically.

>> L.J.: Incredible.

>> LEANNA KEYES: That was a fast learning process, but I mean, everything is a learnable skill. There's nothing in the world you can't learn how to do, so I'm just going to learn it. Why not?

>> L.J.: So is that the producer's motto, give me a day?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Well, you know, give me a day and you will pay extra. Give me a week and you will get it at normal rates.  
(Laughter)

>> LEANNA KEYES: That late night overtime is not free.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I want to build off of what Leanna is saying. There's a responsibility that lands on the producer even though you are sharing it with the creative team or your partner. But when you are in an intimate setting, I also freelance and produce things on my own outside of Center Theatre Group and then I become a little bit of a mix producer production manager.

That was a learning curve for me. I was taking freelance projects. Why am I building the set? And it starts, so I think it's also really good to define those boundaries when you are working freelance. And as an independent contractor, because people may assume you are going to do literally everything.

And sometimes you may not have the time or wherewithal or the scope is just, you

know, with compensation maybe not, you know, affordable for you to be able to do everything, or if it's a project you just love and you know I am going to go in and give 200 percent because I love this project and it's not about the compensation or the boundaries.

But you just have to be mindful of that.

>> L.J.: Yes. That's such a great point. So this is, like, really on the spot. But producer versus production manager, what is the difference?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah. So in a typical again, typical regional setting, a production team has a very specialized skills that lean towards the technical aspects of producing theater. So everything from tech directors to production managers to, you know, people that can actually work in auto CAD and draw a ground plan for the team.

But the production manager is coordinating all of those technical aspects of the production. So how big is the set? Who is setting that up? The schedule of the day, when is the crew coming in? How long is that going to be? Also working with the stage managers to make sure that the day runs smoothly and that the crew gets their necessary breaks including also the actors.

And so they are really running all of the behind the scenes with the producer, but more so hands on in the technical aspects. And so again, you know, when I produce maybe a smaller more intimate show, I'm kind of doing both, producing side and the production manager side, I have found. Maybe that's not typical, but I found that blurs together.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah, 100 percent.

>> L.J.: Sounds accurate for what I know of the theatre world.

>> LEANNA KEYES: I have been a production manager who had a producer. I have never been a producer who had a production manager.

>> L.J.: That's a really important distinction.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Since I know a lot of people in audience today are new thing theatre artists, basically in my early career especially I didn't know what to ask for and I didn't know what was reasonable. I accepted some very small stipends to do a great quantity of work. I got the production manager title. My first ever production manager gig.

When I went back to that organization some years later and they were, like, hey, what do you do and I listed all the things, and they were, like, so you are a producer, not a production manager. I was, like, I am? So there's a lot of fluidity in the titles

and what it means and the responsibility and the compensation.

>> L.J.: So even though those two roles are completely different, if you were a person that wanted to become a producer, would production manager be a good steppingstone or a good path to get there if you were wanting to work for a larger entity or regional theater? Production in the name, just to be clear, you know?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah. Well, for me personally, one of the priorities that I have, I actually started thinking of this mindset in college when I was primarily a stage manager. But I still hold true to it is that it is important that you are able to understand and speak the language of all of your collaborators so that you actually know what is reasonable. What sounds like a reasonable turnaround time? What actual resources do they need?

Oftentimes people in creative pursuits are very siloed into I am an animate or scenic artist. Those skills are deeply multidisciplinary and a lot of people can be good at a lot of different things. By being a production manager, I was able to interact directly with so many different aspects of what it meant to produce, to create, to build physical I think so this, to book tickets for folks, all of these sort of, like, detail-type things.

Now that I'm upgrading myself into a producer, I have a much greater understanding of what people need to do their jobs well. I practically think of being a production manager and being a producer as giving people the tools and resources that they need to be successful.

>> L.J.: Right. That's a really great definition. Giving people the tools they need in order to be successful. I love that.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah.

>> L.J.: Yeah. I think that I lost my train of thought. Patricia, did you have anything?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah, I did. I think that I have found that's great for like are, a more entrepreneurial approach. I also think in regionals, there's, I'm not saying this is necessarily the correct way to do it. There's no one way to do anything. Is that me having a programming experience and background tends to help more in that transition in the artistic scene because a lot of times with the artistic teams, you are building relationships with artists.

And you are also developing programmatic initiatives that are, like, new play development as a programmatic initiative. We have a couple of different artistic programs that I manage for the company, like Sherwood is a grant program. And so it's kind of learning that language and how to work with artists and how to give feedback to artists, how to shepherd through a process.

I think production managers obviously they have to do that with scenic artists and prop artisans, et cetera. I am just not sure if they toggle to the programming side. I think they definitely can for sure. I think in regional theaters it tends to be or what I have seen which I would love to see this challenged and to see more production managers go over to artistic team is I think it tends to come out of education community partnerships, directors tending to right into, like, producing roles. Even folks who may be have more of a management background kind of tending to into that. I think it's also tied to the budget.

>> L.J.: Mm-hmm.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And so it totally makes sense, though, the relationship. Because production managers also oversee the budget as well and feel that out.

>> L.J.: That's so interesting. I remember what I was about to say. And it ties in perfectly with what you are saying, Patricia. Leanna said she upgraded herself to producer. And I think I have decided that's the only way to do it. In my experience fresh out of college I worked in Patron Services. I then went to work in Audience Development. And so and now I'm a teaching artist, right.

And in all of these different roles within nonprofit organizations, even with script coverage and other things that I have done within a nonprofit organization, I still had a hard time figuring out how to get up the ladder to where it is I wanted to be and how, like, what track exactly am I on? If I'm working in the Marketing department in the theatre, what track am I on?

If I'm working on the production side in the theater, what track am I on? Because you are right, Patricia, they don't always intersect. People don't always necessarily criss-cross. If you are working on the Artistic side, you tend to stay over here. If you are on the admin side, you might end up at, like, I guess managing producer, is that what that would be at the top of the admin side or no?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Producing Director. There are some people that are Producing Artistic Directors like Pasadena Playhouse.

>> L.J.: I think ultimately at the end of the day you have to upgrade yourself. That's why I started Maroon Arts and Culture. That's why I want to create my own work. I'm tired of trying to figure out where to get in in order to track up to that place. I'm just going to upgrade myself and, you know, declare myself a producer. There it is, folks. Yeah, that's really interesting.

I have a hot take.

>> LEANNA KEYES: I love a hot take. Give me some spice.



>> L.J.: Leanna, Digital Producer?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Streaming Producer. That's the thing I call myself, streaming producer.

>> L.J.: Okay. But have you replaced the Technical Director?

>> LEANNA KEYES: I would say yeah, kind of. Depending on what organization I'm talking to, they will often, like, they will offer me a contract as a Technical Director. So basically for me personally, as a Streaming Producer, functionally what I'm doing, most of the time, not all the time, but most of the time, I am pulling together, like, best practices for video, for audio, for lighting, and oftentimes there are other people that I can receive assistance from or people who I can call upon to, like, troubleshoot actor microphone issues. There's always microphone issues. But usually if there is a technical question, the buck stops with me.

>> L.J.: Mm-hmm. So does that mean that if you are a student, like if you are an emerging artist and you have been studying technical direction in college this whole time, like, might it be beneficial to expand your skills set to digital production?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Oh, my gosh, yeah. I mean, it's so interesting to me. When I look back on my own career trajectory, I often really think of it as, like, a skills trajectory more so than, like, oh, I started out at a small place and went bigger. That's not it at all.

For me it was about learning new skills, practicing them, getting really competent at them, forming relationships with theatres who know that when they hire me they are getting something.

>> L.J.: Mm-hmm.

>> LEANNA KEYES: So many of the skills are so deeply transferrable, right. Like, you know, back in high school on a pirated edition of Photoshop I learned how to make Photoshop shops. Now that I have a business, I can render really cool graphics using Photoshop. Right. I'm building on those skills.

I didn't pirate Photoshop in high school so I could make animations of flower petals falling from the sky. But now that I have that skill, when I was in a situation where someone was, like, hey, can you do this, I was, like, yeah, I could. I would love to very briefly take over my own webcam here.

I'm hopeful this will look good for the streaming compression. But we will see how it goes. So, like, this is from 'Downtown Crossing' which I did with Company One Theater in Boston. And everything you are seeing was done purely live. Nothing was prerecorded.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Oh, I love that!

>> LEANNA KEYES: I just made that. I didn't go to school and everyone was, like, here is how you do the specialized rose petal effect.

>> L.J.: I love it.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Much of the time there are very, very, there's a lot of tutorials out there that will teach you. If you don't know how to do something, here is how you do it. So I do a lot of Googling in my process. There's always opportunities to learn whether that's through freebie services or paid services.

>> L.J.: Go ahead, Patricia.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I was going to say what I have been seeing is the evolution of the Stage Manager role and how as a Stage Manager up to now not necessarily Leanna's level, but really know all of those skills because you are running Zoom rooms and not just, you know, let me press a button. You are really, like, managing people's schedule, letting them in the waiting room. And then they are now moving into calling digital productions which is a totally different skills set. And also potentially even sliding into that kind of digital role. And so I would say that's something I would really encourage Stage Managers to really start, you know, doing that Googling.

And I have seen it, even with us, we brought in some Reading Supervisors for these film projects and our entire rehearsal process was online. And then we had to, day of they had to run the show like a typical show. But it's film, so it was also about holding and oh, we didn't get that shot or we didn't get that mic picked up. So just learning a new language and not being afraid of it, and knowing that this is theatre, too, in just a different form.

>> L.J.: Yes! I love that. Yes. And also, so we talked a little bit about what skills you need in order to be a good producer, right. You need to have good project management skills. You have to be able to communicate with people. I personally think that a lot of people I know with what I call Stage Manager personalities, I think that they would make great producers. But maybe again they just never considered it as an option.

What do you all think about, like, what skills, what kind of—I mean, so I used to teach middle school, right? And in a classroom with 30 eighth graders, I could tell within six weeks who was going to be my Stage Manager for the season. Stage Managers have a Stage Manager personality. And the same with the actors. You could always tell who would going to be the first in line to audition.

So, you know, if I'm looking for potential producers, what skills sets do they have? What is the producer's personality like?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: It's so varied, but I feel also it's always great to ground yourself in the artistic practice first. I feel like a great producer, at least I can speak from the I. I think that you really need to know the work and what is the intentionality behind the work. o there are different processes. There's playwright-driven processes. Then there's hypercollaborative processes and now definitely sphere. And that takes a different approach.

I feel like in general all the things you mentioned, L. J., organized, proactive. I would also put in leading with compassion and grace. Everybody is going through their own artistic process, and so sometimes you have to really take those late night phone calls in the panic. (Laughter)

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I would also say budget conscious and really know artists and their work and who is going to work well together and know how to navigate that language. And also be able to really make some tough calls literally, right in the day of, but also on phone calls and really be able to say through relationships, you know, oh, I know you want this, but it's just not possible. Or I hear you and I am going to really go to the mat for and hold those relationships. I don't know, Leanna, if you had other things you were thinking?

>> LEANNA KEYES: I want to underline compassion. And I want to pair compassion with, I don't have a word for this just yet, but at least for me, many people who are in Stage Manager roles, Production Manager roles, oftentimes coming from a place of service where your own needs and your own opinions are subservient to others, I think that's why women are drawn to being stage managers. Oh, other people are more important than me.

Having compassion for everyone and also knowing that sometimes you need to be the personal who says you have said that you were going to do this. The work is suffering because you haven't done this. What do you need to do to get the work to where it needs to be? That can be a conversation that a lot of people find intimidating.

My experience has been if you are not approaching it from a place of hey, screw you, you are not doing your job, you are fired, never come it to it from that angle. Hey, I notice this cue hasn't been landing the way it's supposed to land. What's happening in that moment that I can help work through with you, or what equipment do you need to get this to a better level?

Particularly in the digital world. I witness a lot of compassion for actors who are being asked to act to a screen which is an incredible skills set. And no one ever taught them that. They are usually asked to be their own technicians as well. That's all very difficult.

I have witnessed less compassion towards stage managers and technicians who are also being asked to completely rewrite everything they know. So part of me as a

Producer, as a Streaming Producer in particular, is having grace for those difficult conversations and knowing that everyone has the same goal. No one is out to secretly sink the ship of a streaming production. Everyone wants this to work. So just keeping that in mind is very important.

>> L.J.: Yes, yes. That's tough. And you know, being a good boss and a good leader is not a skill that everyone has. I don't think that's a problem, you know, everybody is not good at everything. And nobody has to be good at everything. But it is, there is something to being able to say I am going to acknowledge that you are not doing what you are supposed to be doing. But then let's work together to figure out what needs to be done in order for this to get done the way we discussed it.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> L.J.: I mean, like, is that something you can practice?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Oh, 100 percent. So listen, everything is a learnable skill. (Laughter)

>> LEANNA KEYES: And, like, God knows that in various places in my career I have been a bad manager. I know that about myself. You know, there was one production in the Bay Area where I did not have the best relationship with my Costume Designer. And the reason for that was because I was given a horrifically low budget to pull off an amazing thing.

And so I was displacing all of this frustration that I had with my organization into this relationship with the Costume Designer and asking way too much of him. Because I was early career and I didn't realize oh, it's not actually that this person is bad or we aren't good collaborators. Reality is, the organization is underfunded and if we had the resources to give to each other, this would have been a better relationship. Part of my own growth process has been getting better at recognizing where my emotions are coming from, and using those emotions rather than letting them use me.

>> L.J.: That's great advice.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah, I would just want to offer, you know, not to get too specific, but, you know, I think one of the questions we talked about, L. J., is producing in COVID during this time. And, you know, first and foremost just acknowledging that everybody's attention and energy is so, so split right now. We are just trying to survive, literally, and to take care of ourselves and our health and our families, and our friends and our pets. (Laughter)

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And I know Leanna wants to talk about her pet in a little bit. (Laughter)

>> PATRICIA GARZA: But I think, you know, with Center Theatre Group and turning to, you know, all these COVID protocols and big shout-out to our Operations team that did a lot of the heavy lifting on that, you know, everybody from, you know, the Creative team all the way to the staff had to wear protective gear, and they had to be in these different zones.

And there was dozens of meetings, you know, where people were talking over each other and there was confusion. And we were learning, you know. And so I think there was a lot of misunderstandings and stumbling along. And everybody was doing an amazing job trying to facilitate something that we've never done. And I kept saying through every meeting we've never done this before. We are all learning together.

It's okay. It's okay if I touch the wrong mask or whatever. Let's just have grace and have compassion and we will learn and redo it for the next time. And I think it was really just trying from the very beginning of the project to say this is not going to be done the way we've done it before.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yup.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And to be okay with that and to say, like, we are all in about collaboration all the time.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And it's really hard to do a show with full PPE, N95 face shields under the lights. I kept telling people it's actually really exhausting.

>> L.J.: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Our normal production schedule cannot work.

>> L.J.: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Under this circumstance, even though we want it to work, it can't work and we need to be conscious of what we are asking the staff to do and the cast. Their comfortability being tested and then being maskless during the performance and making sure everybody's six feet apart. So it is just a very different process. One that Center Theatre Group was super-dedicated to everybody's safety first.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Good.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: But it also just impacts the art-making process. Right. It's a different thing. Yeah. So that was just a big learning curve for us.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> L.J.: You know, I like this discussion because I think part of the reason why I think I would be a good Producer is, I like confronting things that I have never done before. You know, I feel like the best thing about theatre is flexibility in improvisation. I love that about live theatre.

If we didn't love that, we would go make movies where we could mess up and just shoot it over again. So I think that to be a good Producer, you kind of have to be able to get into that and confront that because it's really easy to get boggled down into the struggles and just be, like, oh, it's too hard. Versus pushing through with everyone's interest at heart. So I don't know. Is that true? Is that, like, a thing for being a Producer? You have to be into being able to confront things that may seem hard? Does that make sense?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Hmm. Yeah, yeah, I think part of the process of, I think, being an early career professional of any type, part of the process of being an artist, part of being an adult human is knowing that you can try something and you can fail at it. You know, just saying, like, I'm going to do my best and if it's not great, then I am going to learn. You know? I think—

>> L.J.: Very hard for me. (Laughter)

>> LEANNA KEYES: Right. But many people I think if they are not really good at something out of the gate, they are, like, oh, other people are better than this.

>> L.J.: Mm-hmm.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Like, so I have been watching the YouTube chat here. And Annie Lesser here many people feel unsure trying to sell themselves. Part of being a good collaborator is acknowledging to other folks, oh, I didn't do that quite right or that could have gone better. Or acknowledging when other people have been lifting you up in that process. I always, always, always try to give credit to other people who have good ideas.

And that builds a collaborative relationship where even if I try something that didn't quite work, we recognize that we are coming to each other from a position of thought partners from a position of collaboration where we can build something together that will be better next time rather than dwelling on this thing failed.

>> L.J.: Yes.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I love that. And I also love that. And I think it's so right and I think it's also important to know, to be on top of your stuff, you know, when you are coming—when you do have collaborators, I think, you know, as especially if you are deemed Producer, I think it's also about not wasting people's time.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yes.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: It's coming to the table and saying okay, what are we discussing? This meeting is about this. Let's get this done. You are going to be reliable. You are going to be accountable to yourself, but also to the team, right. And I love acknowledgement. I think it's so important to not, you know, bask in the glory of, you know, I did this all on my own. I think and also just to be real and to say hey, I really don't know what I'm doing here. Let's talk it out. Let's figure it out. I would love your eyes on this. I would love to hear your thoughts.

But in terms of selling yourself, I also think it's about the art kind of speaks for itself. As, you know, a queer person that's moving about this world, you know, I'm really, I really make a point when I freelance particularly because I don't have a lot of free time because I have a full-time job. So depending if you need to juggle a full-time job and do your freelance thing on the side, I would say just prioritize projects that are really meaningful to you, too.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And that kind of speaks for itself. Like, I produce so much at work that I'm, like, I really don't necessarily want to freelance a ton. But for example, last year, an amazing trans artist and activist came to me and wanted me to produce her one-woman show cabaret. And I was, like, oh, I would love to work on this. It's called 'Manifest Pussy.'

>> LEANNA KEYES: It's so good.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: It's so good. And I really made the time because I said my portfolio needs to speak for itself. And it needs to put trans people of color first. And so I just made the time and, like, told my work and moved some things around. But at the same time I was at the theatre until midnight working with her and putting up her piece. But it was really important to me. So...

>> L.J.: Just to the participants, you can go back to week 1. We started with finding the artistic perspective, your artistic point of view and then building a career around that, right. So that you can find yourself a mission and then constantly be working towards that mission in all of your gigs, because like most of us, we have several gigs.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Exactly.

>> L.J.: So we are joined in the chat by several people. I see some familiar names who are doing, we are doing basically a working group as a companion to this program. And it's a group of about 12 of us who are interested in producing our own work and getting projects off the ground.

And so what I would like to talk to you both about is what is the play development or I guess in this world, in 2020, it would be, like, a project development, right? Because it could be a play. It could be mixed media. Could be streaming. What does the development process look like for a Producer? Where do you start? What's the first thing do you and what are some of the most important elements you have to remember in that process?

>> LEANNA KEYES: For me, I will start if that's okay, Patricia.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yes, please. Digital world first!

>> LEANNA KEYES: In the digital world, a lot of it is figuring out—I mentioned this earlier in my introduction. But having it be human first, not technology first. And just, like, literally just having that conversation with everyone around the Zoom table saying, like, listen, we are going to do our absolute best to do some really cool technical things because the art actually will be better if it's not just Brady Bunch squares. If we have some elements I think that can remind people we are still making meaningful art, not making art because we are panicking.

I think a lot of it is this field is so rapidly evolving, knowing that other people have better ideas than you and, you know, learning from other people, better processes. Almost every day I save a link that someone sends me of hey, how did they pull this off? What did they do? So I then, like, I'm learning from other folks and in conversation with other folks.

I think part of being a good Producer right now is knowing that you can do everything you can to make a great plan, and then the day of, there's a hurricane in New Orleans and you can't actually connect to that actor in the way that you were planning to. You know, I had one show that I was producing, this was an independent reading of the play 'Now is the Time' which was about the suffrage movement in Reconstruction. We had an actor who was in New Orleans who basically lost all viable internet connections about ten minutes to curtain.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Wow!

>> LEANNA KEYES: So rather than it becoming a matter of panicking or canceling, it was, like, okay, I can get maybe 20 kilobytes per second over a phone connection from this guy. What can I do to recreate this whole thing to make this still happen? Because there are a lot of people here. For me that was, like, okay, I have all of these plans in place to get these HD video, HD signals, but Zoom actually uses next to no bandwidth compared to the solution that I'm currently using. I am going to put this one guy in a one-person Zoom room with just him, and I am going to screen capture him in and I am going to capture just his audio and I am going to feed audio right back to him. And I had not done that before. I had not had that plan in place. But I knew all of the building blocks and I was, like, okay.



If I wasn't freaked out about the fact that I have curtain in ten minutes, is this how I would do this? Yeah, I will do it and then I did and it worked great. A lot of producing right now is rolling with unexpected children, child care issues in the background, is dealing with actors in Puerto Rico and there are frogs chirping in the background during evening shows.

So many things we don't have a common vocabulary for, we just go, okay, we are going to do what we can with what we have. And what we have is this particular actor in this situation.

>> L.J.: Leanna, what's the first question? Let's say somebody is, like, hey, we want to hire you to produce our digital thing, what's the first question that you ask them or what's the first piece of information you need to get from that person or that entity?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah. The truthful answer is, so before I respond to any inquiries, I, like, Google the person. I Google the org. I'm, like, are you people that I want to work with? Have there been any racism or sexual assault scandals at your theatre?

>> L.J.: Due diligence, people, due diligence.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yes!

>> LEANNA KEYES: God knows. I live in Memphis, Tennessee. I don't think it's time to get into the scandals that have happened here, but it's happened here. So that's a big part of it. It's also getting a sense of the resources of the organization, you know, what I'm able to offer to a large theater like American Conservatory Theater is going to be different than what I'm able to offer to people who are putting on their own show to themselves.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Their own arts and culture.

>> LEANNA KEYES: This is part of it, L. J. If you have a CEO of your theatre making a million bucks a year, excuse me, not CEO, an Artistic Director or Executive Director, if you are, like, being in multiple million dollars a year and you are offering me 20 bucks an hour, I'm, like, no, I'm not going to do that.

But if you are a small place like arts and culture or this Reset Theater Coalition which was a coalition of BIPOC-led theaters that were doing streaming shows, you know, I'm going to give hugely discounted rates to organizations who are doing work that I like. I also another thing that I do before I ever ask any questions of them is, like, try and gather information around who is getting paid and how much on that show. I never want to be in a situation where, like, the actors are working for free and I'm getting fifty bucks an hour. That's not equitable to me.

I don't want to be in a situation where I'm making 15 bucks and, you know, the director is making 50 bucks an hour. Pay equity and the equal contribution of all of these important collaborators is important to me. So some of my early conversations around working with folks are, like, who are you? Do you produce in an equitable manner? I never want to go into a production being hired by someone, and then feeling gross about anything that they ask me to do. I want to be able to stand behind any decisions that a partner asks me to convey to people. So that's important to me. And then, of course, there are the logistical questions.

>> L.J.: Give me some logistics!

>> LEANNA KEYES: I want to ground it in the actual ethics of it, because ethics are important to me. But the logistical questions are, you know, what level of production quality are you looking for? Is this going to be, like, a green screen situation or are we mostly going to have talking heads in different arrangements? Have you done anything like this before?

>> L.J.: Yeah.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Do you have in-house talent that can stream and produce things already that you are just looking to amplify? Are you looking for a consultation where we can just, like, talk through your options? Or are you looking to actually hire me to do stuff on the day of? Do you want to hire me to do consultations as needed? Do you want me on retainer? A retainer is increasingly popular model in my field. So there's a lot of different ways that my collaboration can work with different clients. So I always want to know, like, can we set up a meeting so we can talk about what you actually need as opposed to what you think you currently need about a field you don't necessarily understand yet?

>> L.J.: Yes. Also just the ethics part is very important. I mean, yeah, you have to know, depending on what your work is, you kind of have to know what questions, ethical questions to ask at the top. I do dramaturgy. And lately everybody getting a lot of clients who are, you know, white playwrights who may have one or two people of color in their scripts. And so they want somebody to read through and make sure everybody is okay which, you know, everybody has a need, so I'm happy to meet that need.

But I do try to ask a few questions before I get into it. And also, too, if I'm working on a Black show because I tend to work mostly on shows by Black playwrights, you know, one question I always ask is, do you have enough access to Black actors to do this show? Which you would be surprised how many people that took off my plate. They said oh, we plan on reaching out to or plan on finding. Okay, you don't already have access to those people. That's super-important.

>> LEANNA KEYES: You have already not been casting people you should have been casting.

>> L.J.: Those are super-important things to point out. You have got something to parking lot, Leanna?

>> LEANNA KEYES: Oh, yeah, I was reminded helpfully what is a retainer in a theatrical world? Basically a retainer is if someone knows that there are going to need me for something but they don't want to stress about, is this question bad enough to spend a billable hour with this person? I just want to be able to e-mail them and not stress about it, they can just do a down payment on me, basically and I will just keep track of hours as we go. And if they need me, they can reserve availability during time spots without needing me there.

I think it's a really smart model. Yeah, I also, L. J., I just want to echo, like, I have had very bad experiences with producers who, like, so one of my many hats, I'm a playwright as well. And, like, I had a play that called for a Black trans man and a white trans woman and they cast it with two white nonbinary actors. And I was, like, and they were like—and I was, like, so you know you can't do this play, right? And they were, like, no, no, we cast trans people.

I was, like, no—well, yes, you did, but this character literally talks about being Black and how that impacted his transition. What were you thinking? Well, you mentioned you could do a rewrite for the actors. This means you actually don't understand this play because you thought that this was just, like, a surface-level line change as opposed to something that's deeply baked into the play.

So, like, part of being a good Producer is recognizing that if you are taking on a project, you need to actually support that project, not, like, oh, and here is my trans slot. Here is my Black play slot that I am going to do in the spring. You actually need to engage with the specificity of the artists and the art so that you can make it ethically and also just, like, do it good.

>> L.J.: Yeah. Yeah. I think that that's super-important, very important.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah, I just wanted to add to that in terms of, like, you already covered it, Leanna. (Laughter)

>> PATRICIA GARZA: But in terms of playwright-driven work, that to me I was going to say and offer that that's, like, the first thing, right, is, like, read the play. (Laughter)

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Read the play. Meet with the artists. Really get down the intentionality of that artist with this project, because depending on the format, right, if it's going to be digital or if it's going to be film or if it's going to be live, you have to understand kind of what's the scope of their dream. You know, with Shakina, we were talking about it being an industry project. Like, that was really a showcase for her to get film and TV and theatre people there so that way this piece in particular, but also her as a brand was in front of people.

So we approached it very differently than we would have if it was just for fun or maybe ticket sales-driven and it was a little bit of both. But we really laid out those expectations at the forefront because that impacted budget and it also impacted the house where we were going to do this at because we needed X amount of ticket for industry folks. But she also wanted to make her money back. It was all of these goals that we had to set up.

And then also what was best for the piece artistically that it wasn't going to be in some shoe box because she needed musical production quality level sound system, for example. So just really starting with the work versus the device process I know you interviewed Nancy Keystone from critical mass performance group before. That was an ensemble. That work is created over six years. You know, and so that's going to be a very different process that working with Nancy versus playwright that's trying to get their work produced maybe in the next three months or four months. And so really listening and also having conversations around what do we want this process to be? And then I think putting a budget to it is really important. That's, like, almost, like, the second thing we do, right, because it's, like, is it feasible? Where is the funding coming from? If it's coming from a producing entity, they know how much it's going to cost. So the artist isn't always having to compromise way down the line. We ran out of money so we are going to cut that actor. (Laughter)

>> PATRICIA GARZA: We want to really make sure the integrity of the piece is kept intact. And you as a Producer are not put in an uncomfortable situation of oh, we ran out of money or oh, we didn't budget that. Things come up, obviously, that's where there's contingency. For the most part you go in knowing how you are going to approach the work financially and also artistically.

>> L.J.: This leads me into my next topic which is my favorite topic which is the budget, the money, the bread, the cheese. I am a person that believes that the more we talk about how this part is done, the more truly equitable and accessible the theatre becomes. I asked everybody on camera what their annual budget was last week. And I shared mine because it's, like, \$5. (Laughter)

>> PATRICIA GARZA: L. J., you are doing good work.

>> L.J.: I upgraded myself to Producer today, so we will see if that increases my budget line. So you all, we talked about retainer models and talked about all these different ways to get paid. How do producers get paid? That's my first question. How do producers get paid? And my second question is, what are the most expensive things on the budget when you are making a budget for a show?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: That's a great question. I also want to offer and I know I sent this to Camille so maybe we could put this in the chat. The differences between commercial producing and other types of producing. With commercial producing on Broadway, there's an investor model. And so This American Theatre just put out an article. There are eight BIPOC producers coming together to form a

fund called the Industry Standard Group. Sammy Lopez is a good friend of mine and is part of that founding membership.

And I just want to give them a shout-out and put that article in the chat because this is really revolutionary in terms of how commercial producing is going to be investing and producing in funds on Broadway. And they are taking, and I wrote this down, they are taking gifts not only from BIPOC folks but also from allies. And that's really going to go into building this fund that will go into eliminating or at least lowering the risk of these folks' investments in these commercial producing entities. That's super super important that Broadway and commercial producing is getting kind of a new way, a new model of working. So that's incredible.

And then also in terms of your question about the budget, I would say, I would say and Leanna maybe it's different for your digital sphere, but in terms of a typical show, people, I would say a lot of money is going to people, so cast, and also when you are paying a fee to cast an original model obviously we are also paying benefits. So if they are in part of a union or if they have you, you know, Workers' Comp attached to them, so it's not just their fear. It's also the fringe benefits that comes along with paying those folks.

So hopefully people first to your point, human first, and then obviously in the film world we are finding that that's going to be a big chunk of the budget is the film entity that we are partnering with to get this on film and edited.

>> L.J.: Mm-hmm.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I don't know, Leanna, it's probably different in your world.

>> LEANNA KEYES: I'm in a fortunate position where I actually have a specific experience to talk about here which is I have been producing the Bay Area's Playwright Festival for the past five years which was obviously in person. And then this year was fully digital.

>> L.J.: Yay, shout-out. That's where I met Leanna!

>> LEANNA KEYES: I did great work in it. Also I'm going to change my background here, do not be alarmed.

The biggest change for us in that festival was we didn't have to pay San Francisco scummy landlords a ton of rent money to put up all these amazing artists. We didn't have AirBNB. We didn't have plane tickets. We didn't have the environmental impact.

>> L.J.: That's so true.

>> LEANNA KEYES: We were able to reallocate all those funds into, like, outreaching to theaters who ordinarily would not ever be able to attend an in-person event in San Francisco. We were able to pay our artists more. We were able to hire professional PAs rather than asking interns to do it. You know, we didn't have to worry about a set design or anything like that.

Especially for organizations that have, that don't have their own theatre space where they are ordinarily putting a huge amount of their budget renting a place to get butts in seats. It's so vastly cheaper to produce, I am not going to say cheaper. It's more affordable and it also, you know, just opens so many more doors to collaborators. Like, in that festival I had one show where I had actors in Hong Kong and Taiwan and also New York literally a 12-hour time zone difference. And so we were able to produce better work that was more vitally important because we were not spending money on AirBNB, on air fare and on, like, cars. Yeah, yeah. Get the artists paid.

>> L.J.: Yeah.

>> LEANNA KEYES: And in terms of what is the most expensive things in terms of digital production, it's usually me.

>> L.J.: Yeah. You have all of the skills set, right. You are the Technical Director. You have got the technology for the scenic design. You know, it's one thing to have an idea, but it's another thing to have the skills set to bring it to fruition.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> L.J.: So what about, how do producers get paid? I upgraded myself to producer today as you all know. (Laughter)

>> L.J.: My title on the screen here. So how do I get paid now?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Well, it depends on the model, right. I feel like I work for regional theatres so I'm part of the Artistic team, so I get a salary. So that's nice, bonus. So that's an option, right. If you go full-time employment at an artistic institution. And times that is the most sustainable to some folks, right. That's something they feel comfortable with. They have the house benefits. They have a kind of 9:00 to 5:00ish, not really. Nothing's ever 9:00 to 5:00.

When I free languages, I'm sure Leanna has different situations depending on the model. If it's a project I believe in, I may do a profit sharing split with the producing entity or Producing Artist, or I say if it reaches this threshold, right, if you could pay yourself back, then I will take a cut or whatever it is. Sometimes it's very minimal. I will say, okay, based on an hourly rate that I feel comfortable with which I have a whole formula for.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I say okay, it's going to be this amount per hour or I will just round up and say okay, it's going to be this stipend depending on the budget size. Sometimes I volunteer if it's something I really I think that I could set really clear boundaries and something again back to that artistic mission that I feel I really needed in my portfolio or I want to gift my time, I do that less and less as I become obviously older in my career. Because time is money and I would rather be at home snuggling my wife and my dogs.

And so I think it's also about, you have to at some point have a realistic conversation with yourself and say I can't do things for free. I just cannot.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: That may mean you pass on some really cool things. But if they don't have a budget to pay you, that is probably a budget that is a little bit red-flaggy because then you are going to be working and asking, to your point, Leanna, I think you said this about ethics.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: You don't want people working for free. Like, hundreds of hours. That's just—

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: That's just unsustainable. And so I think it's also that, and then I think just having those, like, a good resource I could have Camille share is Artists U. They have a free booklet online where you can calculate an hourly rate based on a couple of different questions that they have you go there. I will put that in the chat. But I would love to hear Leanna because I know you have a whole business.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Similar to you, it's different models for different occasions. I believe anyone working on a project should get paid one way or another. And I tend to avoid paying people in exposure because exposure kills. (Laughter)

>> LEANNA KEYES: And also the other things it does is it provides—it gates who can participate in your art, right. You are going to get very different artists in the room if you are asking everyone to work for free.

>> L.J.: Yeah.

>> LEANNA KEYES: And for me, I don't think that, theatre should not only be done by people whose parents can bank roll them for a couple of months while they work on a show. I'm bored of that theatre. No one wants that. So in terms of getting paid, I offer, like, really transparent models to all of my clients where I'm

just, like, you know, if you want to pay me an hourly rate and tell me what it do, I will do it, sure, here is the rate.

If you want to, like, if you prefer to just, like, pay me as an expense and you just want a set amount, I will, you know, take how many hours you are asking me to do, give or take. I will estimate. I will pad that by 20, 25 percent, because it always takes more time than they think it's going to take. Multiply it by my rate and then pitch it to them.

>> L.J.: Yeah.

>> LEANNA KEYES: You know, and I'm always very transparent around if you want this level of thing, or if this is how much money you have to give, this is what I will give you back. If you are looking for something more that will take extra money. You know, like, on this previous show where I had to take over as the Animation Designer very last-minute, I was, like, hey, I will do the demo for free because I know you didn't hire me to do visuals for you. But if I'm taking this over, I am going to be credited as the designer and I am going to bill for it. I feel the professional collaborators I work with respect me much more now that I'm claiming that my time is worth something as opposed to before when I was, like, groveling for a job, right.

It oftentimes felt to me I was, like, "oh, please hire me to be your Stage Manager. I will die if I don't get a job." Now that I'm just presenting myself as yes, I do have skills, people are way more willing to pay me for it. Part of it is, I have a company. Having a logo, people are, like, you want more money? Here you go. (Laughter)

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Professionalism, yeah.

>> LEANNA KEYES: If you have a website that is professional and has a good representation of your work, yeah, you are a person who is investing in yourself and investing in your talent. And they will pay you much more. The logical stuff I have a QuickBooks account. They can pay me by check. I take credit card. Venmo. If all you can do is Paypal me—

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And I just felt, like, yeah, not to say there's a lot of equity issues around professionalism.

>> LEANNA KEYES: True.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And who defines that and just acknowledging that, but I also feel like it was really hard for people to get ahold of me. And so now I'm working with a really great friend Chelsea who is putting together a website and bless her because I'm the worst person to get ahold of and looking at drafts. I'm so excited because for the first time I'm able to talk about all my work in one place.



>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: It's producing, equity consulting, facilitation, and I'm so happy because I'm look, like, even if I get one gig out of this, it's going to be so much easier than me, like, digging out some old crusty résumé.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah, as a producer, if I, like, try and Google someone and I don't have a way to reach them, like, I'm going to keep looking for them if they are the really right person for this project. It's so much easier to give people money and to hire people if I have a way to contact them within five minutes of thinking oh, I should contact that person.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Absolutely.

>> L.J.: It's so funny. It's like a running joke for me. Everyone knows I don't work for free. Nobody should work for free. We are all talented and we all have valuable skills. And I just encourage everyone who is watching and everyone who is watching on the replay to take advantage of this booklet. I can't wait to get into it and calculate hourly rates for yourself.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah, that's great.

>> L.J.: When we were in the boot camp last week, I think we talked about this last week. When you are making a budget, even when you are producing your own work, you have to figure out how much it's going to cost you to work on your own show, right. Whatever your hourly rate is, you need to figure out how many hours it's going to take you as an individual to put the show up and then that's how much it's going to cost you and make yourself a line item in the budget.

>> LEANNA KEYES: And just last little thing to throw in, if you were a mediocre white guy from a rich family, you would ask for more money.

>> L.J.: You would. So double it.

>> LEANNA KEYES: I literally double, depending on the organization, just at the initial conversation and then they can talk me back down. I know I'm worth just as much as any other collaborate. So we should all get compensated for that.

>> L.J.: Yes. I called on my grandfather today. He was an entrepreneur. My mom, my parents were entrepreneurs. I'm just lucky to have grown up knowing you never take the first amount. Always negotiate. Always ask for what you think you deserve plus a little bit extra.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> L.J.: Take that away with you all. I am going to do some questions from the chat. I am going to put them up on the screen. Somebody wants to know

how many projects are you participating simultaneously? (Laughter)

>> L.J.: I personally am working on 37,000 projects every day.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Oh, my God. This is a real question, though. Because I would say even at, like, a full-time job I'm always working on, like, at least five to six. And in different stages, right. So you may be pitching something or starting, like, a very introductory conversation with an artist plus in the middle of producing something plus wrapping up another thing, right.

So I would say five to six at any given time. Freelance-wise, that's a whole other conversation again dependent on if you are full-time freelancer or if you have a day job, if you will. And then you are freelancing, I would say just being really conscientious, this is something I learned along the path the hard way with my one-hour sleep sometimes, is that you do have to be real. What's the kind of life you want to have and if you are okay, the next five years I am just going to be working and I know that? But I'm not in that phase right now. I'm not, again, I need my snuggle time with my wife and my pet. So I literally only take one freelance producing gig a year.

>> L.J.: Okay.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And then I may consult and do facilitation when I need extra cash and I know okay, I can handle this workload, but I really stepped in it where I'm going to freelance, I am going to go do this and then I am going to have my full-time thing and then what did I do to myself? I have no weekends, no nights, no, you just have to know going in what your threshold is.

>> L.J.: Yes.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: And also where you are in your trajectory. Maybe it is the next two years. I'm just going to be, like, taking everything and I know that but then really prepared for that mentally, physically, emotionally. And it's going to take a toll on your relationship.

>> L.J.: How many freelancing gigs does it take to make a full-time job?

>> LEANNA KEYES: I don't believe in full-time jobs for me personally. I have curated a life where I don't make much money. I'm not in this to get rich.

>> L.J.: Yeah.

>> LEANNA KEYES: But I'm also not on the planet Earth to get rich. I'm on the planet Earth to love people and have a good time and cuddle with my pet snake and all these other things.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Let's see!

>> L.J.: Let's see the snake.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Folks, content warning, if you are not a snake person, this snake is going to look very large but that's only because he's green screened. He's actually very tiny. This is my assistant snake manager. He sits next to me on my desk. He's over there behind the green screen right now. He's the size of my hand, maybe, at a maximum. He's the light of my life. He's the best.

So rather than, like, killing myself working all the jobs to, like, do every possible thing on the Earth, I would rather hang out with my snake, read a book, watch stuff with my girlfriend, have a good time that way. Especially when you are in this nonprofit hustle mindset, must always be working, must always have income, must be booked a year in advance. Especially when I graduated, that's what I thought I needed to be like. And the actual reality is if you are good and you have friends, not networking, but if you have friends who do work, work will come for you, right.

And I recognize that I am saying I am someone who has educational privilege and white privilege. I imagine that my name probably pops into people's minds before other people who are just as deserving because I do hold certain privileges. But I'm also a queer trans woman. So I'm sure there's a lot of videos for white guys who get thought of before I do.

The important thing here is that when deciding what you are up for, you need to balance it against your life as a human being. But you are more than just the amount of work that you can do. You are more than the Facebook posts or the Instagram posts that you can make about, oh, my show is opening, everyone come see it. It is much better to be, you know, for me personally, like, I would much rather have a lower standard of living and a work/life balance and be making a ton of money, but also, like, not have seen someone I loved for non-COVID reasons in months, right.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I think it goes back to I know Camille is going to laugh at me because I talk about her and everything. But this idea of productivity and self-worth, you know, and I think that when we are emerging, that's how we define our worth and our enoughness. And I think that we just have to know that we are inherently worthy of love and belonging.

And sometimes we just have to accept that it's okay. It's okay to turn it off. I may not be feeling well today. I need to, like, not take this gig. I need to not—so I think it's also just calibrating that. But I would say—there it is. I love it. I love it. Yeah, just being able to have those check-in points with yourself about, I met date every day, but what is that for you? Is it that cup of tea, the snake cuddles? To reset because then you are not going to have enough to give to these artistic projects if you are going from project to project to project, you are not going to be as thoughtful unless you took that moment for yourself.

>> L.J.: I love that this Producers panel is highlighting some of the other things we discussed. That makes sense. The Producer is the person overseeing a lot of different branches. But just starting with your own artistic perspective, Making your work, self-care for the artist, these are all things we are trying to cover in the series. Thank you all for bringing it up.

So as you all see, Leanna's got all of the good technology surprises. We do have a question from the chat. What are some of the programs you would recommend to help create a better virtual production? She also has provided some links that are on the Padlet. So I know that the link to the Padlet was at the top of the chat. So she's got some informational links there if you want to go look at that. But Leanna, what is your input?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I will be listening.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah, okay, so I am going to show you something first and then I am going to tell you how I did it. This is the coolest thing I have ever done.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Oh, I love it.

>> LEANNA KEYES: This is fully live. This is not pre-recorded. Like, if you were turned into a stream, that's what you were warranting. One of those actors is in Boston and then one ever them is far from Boston. And so it's captionings that are happening live with the script. It's actors who are comped into a car. They are all green screened. We have audio mixing. I'm so proud of this moment because this is what the script called for and we wanted to do something that was actually interesting. And the way that I'm doing this effect is with green screens, of course, and then compositing everything together in a program called OBS which is the Open Broadcaster System. I particularly use the OBS Studio but there are other branches of it as well because it is fully free software that is community developed. People have made a lot of progress in making tutorials. Anyone can download this. It works on Macs and PCs. I do a ton of training in this program for organizations and for individuals who are looking to take their streaming level from people in Zoom squares to something where you have control over backgrounds and actor positioning on the screen and sound cues. OBS is an amazing thing that is very common in streaming communities and in gaming communities.

So there are a lot of tutorials online for free that you can just go and watch them. Like, go ahead and download OBS and just goof around a little bit.

>> L.J.: That's been on my to do list for three weeks.

>> LEANNA KEYES: It's intimidating until you remember basically all you are doing is you just drag a bunch of stuff into your screen and you click and drag it around. Normally I'm doing this fancy thing where I'm transitioning between

different sort of things that I built. But I can actually do this live if I wanted to. I can go and drag this thing around on my green screen.

>> L.J.: I don't know why I'm so tickled by that, Ooh!

>> LEANNA KEYES: Right now this is on my green screen layer so it's behind me. If I wanted to, all I have to do is click and drag and suddenly it's in front of me face because it's a different layer. I think a lot of people think oh, I'm not technical in that way. I don't know how I could possibly do that. And the reality is, you could learn it. Everything is learnable.

>> L.J.: Thank you for is that encouragement. I am going to get into it. It's been on my to do list for a while now. I know Arts and Culture has a consult coming up. Maybe you can help me. We've got another question which I think is an important one. Do you create a contract with your fellow collaborators? It's for Leanna, but Patricia, I think you may have some input here.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Patricia, I have been talking.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: 100 percent yes. If I'm the lead on a more intimate project make one artist or producing entity that's a little smaller, yes, I always insist on contracts even one-page MOU, memorandum of understanding where it's not this ten-page LOA where they are having to—I think it's really about your own safety. And I also create one for myself. I never, even if it's just me and a friend, that is going to work on something, I think it's really important.

Sometimes it turns people off and it's really just about communicating, hey, this is for both of us.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Who wants to work with that person? Make sure that stuff is in writing so people get compensated and credited correctly.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Correct.

>> L.J.: Compensated and credited. Both of those things are very important.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Absolutely, absolutely. And I think for your own safety and protection, especially if money is involved, if I'm investing my own money to know what I'm going to get back, to know what the financial arrangement is, you never want to be in a situation where you are putting money down and you are not having something in writing.

>> L.J.: Yeah.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I know Leanna you probably have a whole

structure, but that's—

>> LEANNA KEYES: For me it depends on the org. I have a simple letter of agreement template. I input the person's name and duties. I have a digital signature. Does this look good to you? Yes or no, can we do this? Oftentimes larger organizations provide the contract to me because they have a standard thing that they do to hire people, to hire companies.

In that case, I almost always will have a thing that I will bring up, like, hey, can this be different? Whether I genuinely believe it needs to be different or I'm being protective. How about we change this to say you get rights to my work until the end of this run and if you need it after that, I get a royalty for it, if someone is given that question and they are, like, no, I'm, like, all right, so you are not actually looking to collaborate with me. You are looking to get something from me and then move on with your life and then continue to profit off of it.

So I think you build a much better professional rapport if you remind people that you are being hired by that it is a dialogue between two organizations or two people, not them giving me a gift of money in exchange for hours of my life.

>> L.J.: So honestly I think a contract is really important. And I think that, too, we talked earlier about having tough conversations with folks. I found in my experience if you have a piece of paper you can refer back to, it can make that conversation a little easier when it's a matter of, hey, as you are aware in the contract that you signed kind of what we agreed to, so let me just remind you.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Yeah.

>> L.J.: So before we close for today, do you all, I was hoping you all could share advice for people like myself— oh. Sorry. I interrupted myself because I got distracted.

But Camille was asking about contract templates versus writing at home from scratch. So do either of you have, like, a resource for contract templates? I'm a dramaturg. So if you go to LMDA, they have sample contracts there for dramaturges. Is there anything like that for producers?

>> LEANNA KEYES: If there is, I would love to know about it.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah. I mean, I created my own over years of experience. You can Google. There's definitely templates out there on Google and you could always ask a friend or a colleague and if they are okay sharing that intellectual property, sometimes that's how you get that out in the world. I think it's just really about knowing kind of the standards, right, which is again what we talked about pay and fee structure and then crediting.

And then time line, right, because if a project goes on and you are, like, it's going on,

it's going on and then now I am getting paid a dollar, and I worked on this project for 20 years. And so I think it's really about, like, the typical agreement, right, is, like, fee, cover fee structure, payment structure, and then crediting. Those are the biggest, the number 1 and 2. And then obviously you can layer in other things like boundaries or scope of work.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Very important, yeah.

>> L.J.: Awesome. So what is your advice for people like myself who are interested in producing their own work? If you are a playwright, for example, and you really have a show that you feel passionately about, and you want to produce it yourself, what is your advice for people who want to produce their own projects? Like, how do you start?

>> LEANNA KEYES: So for me personally, a lot of it is about the collaborators, if I'm thinking about making a piece of art, I'm, like, who do I have that, like, already like that I want to work with? In who will either fill a role for me or will be a thought partner? And making something cool? I don't ever want to throw money or throw time at a thing that I don't actually think is going to be that fun to work on. I will happily throw other people's money at stuff that I don't think is going to be fun.

But for stuff I'm doing for myself, it's got to be something that I'm going to actually enjoy the work of doing and that I think is doing important work in the world. So I start with who can I collaborate with, who is going to see this and how do I bring people into my process rather than, like, making a product and then sending it to people and hoping for the best?

>> PATRICIA GARZA: I would offer that, and clarity of vision. Maybe you need these thought partners to get that clarity, but it's really important to know I want it to be the scale. And you can explore that, but I think having a little bit of conversation with yourself about, you know, what is this process, is it a developmental process? Is it more of a—is it more about the process versus the product?

You know, and then starting to bring in collaborators because then people know that expectation and then I always go back to the money, right. Just knowing what's the investment here? Where are those funds coming from? Because that's also going to dictate who you bring into the space and also the scope of the project.

>> L.J.: Mm-hmm. Wonderful. You guys are so aspirational. I'm so happy I got to speak with both of you today. One thing I was hoping to get to that I didn't get a chance to is whether or not you all know of any educational programs, training programs, workshops for aspiring producers. In my experience, it's one of the fields in theatre that is not very frequently taught.

>> LEANNA KEYES: True.

>> L.J.: I know that, for example, the National Black Theater in Harlem has a sole producing residencies, and it's one of the few residencies. If you are a Black artist, definitely check it out. Do you all have any sources like that? If you can't think of any on the spot, you can e-mail me and I will put it on the Padlet.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Producing fellowship robust fellowship. And then Cal Arts has an MFA in producing. Those are two that came right away. They have a little bit of substantial finances. It's an expensive program to go to. But they also produce their own work there with the other MFA students. So that's a good hands-on program.

>> LEANNA KEYES: That's really cool. I didn't know about that.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yeah, and I think yeah, they still have it, yeah, because I know somebody who just recently talked to them.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Cool. In terms of what I'm doing, there's, like, the whole free internet, but there's also my own website here which you should go to if you are interested in learning more about who I am, what I do. And like I said, I teach so many workshops in OBS, in online production. Universities love to give me money to then so that their Technical Director doesn't have to completely learn a whole new system and buy a \$2,000 computer.

So if you are a student or a recent student or you have connections to an organization talk to the people in power and say hey, I gave this really cool talk. Here is a link. Can we hire Leanna to talk to us? She offers a consultation for the initial conversation. So just send that to folks and then you will learn all sorts of really cool things either through the master class or a lecture or a talk. You know, I'm also just to say, like, whenever I'm working with folks, anyone I work with a put into my database. I hire folks and I refer people if I can't do a job myself.

So part of becoming a producer is working with other producers and getting on their lists of, like, oh, this person, like, showed up, like, just this week, and I know we are just with at time here so I will wrap up. Just this week I worked with Company One Theater out in Boston and their Stage Manager who is a student, Emma, I actually never heard her last name out loud, but I believe it's Nice, Emma, of the last ten Stage Managers I worked with either professional or student, Emma is easily top three. And so she's, like, even though she's still just a student, quote/unquote, is at the top of my hire list any time I need someone to do a digital streaming event. Has she produced a thing? Not yet.

But do I think he she has that potential and will I hire her if I need an assistant? Hell yeah.

>> L.J.: And also me!



>> PATRICIA GARZA: Yes, that's great.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Hell yeah! Book yourself. Do it.

>> L.J.: I'm available for producing gigs in addition to my 37,000 other projects. This has been so wonderful. I just really appreciate you both taking the time to hang out with us today. And I can't wait to come back next week with my blue screen. Yes! L. J., Producer. I got my blue screen. Maroon Arts and Culture floating above my shoulder.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: There you go.

>> L.J.: Thank you so much, everybody in the chat, say bye. Oh, next week, so next week we are doing networking versus community building. So we've talked about what it's like working with nonprofits, if you want to produce your own work. We talked about both of these different directions, but for both of these things, you need to have a community of supporters.

And networking is such a scary weird old-school word. What it's really about is community. I did not think about this. But the reason it is phrased in this way is Patricia Garza recommended emerging strategy by Adrian Marie Brown to me and it's now like the model for my organization. And it even came of the last week when we were in conversation with Nancy and David.

So for that recommendation. And again, check out that book. Thank you both so much for your time.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Thank you.

>> L.J.: We will see everyone next Friday for networking versus community-building.

>> LEANNA KEYES: Beautiful.

>> PATRICIA GARZA: Happy election!