

LUCY PAINE (CHAIR) – INTRODUCTION

SARAH LEWIS (WRITER'S HQ)

[Follow Sarah on Twitter](#) // [Visit the Writer's HQ website](#)

Before lockdown had 16 live retreats every month – cancelled all of them in mid-March. First time since 2012 that they haven't run. Running online, without charge. Lost 40% of income overnight. Live events - 15 per retreat. Online events – 300 per retreat! Taken away barrier of getting to a retreat. Uptake in membership as a result.

ALASTAIR WHATLEY (THE ORIGINAL THEATRE COMPANY)

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At time of lockdown – 2 shows out. 1 on a UK tour (due to finish in NY) and a new play The Croft on in Croydon which closed when advised. Everyone was immediately out of work, industry in meltdown. Income cut overnight. All Autumn shows cancelled. Had to consider what to do to adapt while some producers are waiting and riding it out. Both shows filmed on 16 and 17 March – got permissions within a week. Built websites, put shows online and they launched the following week. Charged £2.50 ticket (normally £25/£30) at first no price resistance. All the free content out there suddenly meant it was harder to shift £2.50 tickets. Now people coming round and online sales are good.

Came up with new idea to reset Birdsong (previous successful tour over 6 years) using zoom. Goes live on 1 July. Has evolved from 'online reading' to full length feature film. Sent iphones and rode mics to the cast to film their own scenes, using zoom as communication tool. Sent them green screens and costumes. Out of necessity has sprung this new form.

AMY ISLES FREEMAN

[Follow Amy on Instagram](#) // [Visit Amy's website](#)

Artist based in Brighton. Started business in 2016 after degree in Cornwall, making wooden bowls. Bowl spotted by design journalist on Instagram who reposted it. Got a call four hours later from London Design Fair – offered a stand. Off the back of this, had a call from Liberty London and did a few seasons with them. Since moving to Brighton has diversified product range – murals, hand painted clothing, murals. Before Lockdown curating a wonderful summer working at festivals but everything now cancelled. A big part of dream is to work with groups so this was a blow. Bit of a decline for first two weeks but had to pick herself up again... Has spent energy building online customer base during this time. Noticed posts were getting around x3 'likes' compared to pre-lockdown. To celebrate her birthday ran an offer code on a print – loads of hits and sales off the back of this. Downloaded square space analytics to phone to notice what

was working and generating more of the content that was working. Started selling jumpsuits again – everyone's sitting at home in their festival clothes! AND if people are buying something they're tending more to photograph it and share it due to more phone time. Prints good as easy to post and higher profit margin than other products. Mindset of supporting 'local' has helped business.

RAEHEL PERRIN (SOUNDCASTLE)

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Supporting people through creative music making. Never done anything digital before lockdown but have taken everything online. Also about to launch professional online community. Musical Beacons – 9 years with similar format. Got ACE funding 2 hrs before lockdown for a years' delivery with women in safe houses. DO you wait or go? Wait didn't seem like a possibility so HOW. How do you build trust and connect via zoom? Work is ultimately about sustainability so finding a way for centre staff to embed music into the everyday is important and is part of this new online version of Musical Beacons. Had to begin with a skills audit of team to keep them working and ensure their voices are heard.

### Roundtable Discussion

Alice H – Was due to produce POWERHOUSE, commissioned by Cambridge Junction, this year. I'd previously run The Sistrhood at Glastonbury so would have been an extension of the girlfest and feminist empowerment goodness. Tenderness and attention required to support the marginalised contributors they wanted to involve would have been challenging online. Hard decision to make and there is a grieving period afterwards.

Tony D - When we go out to work, we are with other personality types... when we are at home, we are with our own personality type 24/7. people who have a planning preference need to be with people who prefer to dive in and don't mind making mistakes, and vice versa... I think people need lockdown work buddies. a different approach to our own.

Alistair W – Everyone told me not to do it! Team of associates who are good at challenging my maverick approach.

Sarah L - The stress has been immense. Everyone at WHQ has had to tap out periodically to get some kind of emotional respite. We have an internal system where if it gets too much we have a safe word so we don't actually have to go into detail or try to vocalise what's going on. Our word is 'meatloaf' (I'll do anything for WHQ but I won't do that - ha!). So we just say 'guys I'm meatloafing, back in a day or so' and we all rally round to cover their work until everyone's back again. We also force each other to take time off when we can see tensions rising.

Rachael P - Sarah - this is wonderful. It has been similar with the Soundcastle team. So much care taking of one another and finding space when needed. We're doing lots of covering one another wherever possible and also offering creative challenges when we seem stuck. Remembering to be friends is important too! All the

chats that happen around the edges of a real-life workshop/ meeting have been capped recently.

Amy I F – Been helpful to have the ear of a friend who is in publishing and good at PR etc for an extra push out of comfort zone. Have people online to connect with but missing physical community and still quite new to Brighton.

Rachel P – So often we're undermining what we make. Looking at all aspects creatively like you would the art itself then you're more likely to be resilient.

Lucy P – Is 2020 an opportunity in disguise?

Sarah L – We don't have a choice! Agree with Rachel about approaching everything with creativity. Branch out beyond 'your' creative discipline even. Have found this exciting from a business perspective, 'sleeves up, what are we doing?'

Alistair W – What's different here is that mid-scale touring theatre was already not in a good place. On the positive side of things – booking actors now easier!

Amy I F – Idea of no Christmas markets is a worry. Online audience is young but commercial audience is much older and no way to get to them without physical selling. But business is sustaining itself thanks to health of online audience.

Rachael P – Turnover has doubled and opportunities to grow are there and know that the need for what we do is even greater now.