

# All of Zoom's a Stage

A Story by Jacquelyn N. Smith

Shakespeare's quote, "All the World's a Stage," has taken on a new meaning in my life and the lives of other theater artists during this pandemic. Due to the social distancing orders, theater as we know it has come to a halt, causing us creatives to become even more creative with adapting how theater is presented during this time. The very core of the theater is performing on stage, which is impossible to do during this time. What do we do when the shows we are working on get cancelled? How do we continue working on our craft when we cannot be together? How do we continue our professional goals when the very thing that makes up our profession cannot happen?

So many more questions just like these have arisen in the theatrical community during this time of extreme uncertainty. We cannot perform on an actual stage, so we have to be creative and make the world our stage. Personally, in order to stay sane, I have been trying to keep myself immersed in theater as much as I can within all these restrictions. This keeps me busy and prevents boredom. Ultimately, it distracts me from the depressing thoughts, such as the feeling of being alone, or the fact that the show I was cast in this semester got cancelled. The more I do theater in any way I can, especially when that theater involves other people, the more these thoughts go away.

I started by creating a flexible routine for myself. A routine keeps me busy, but keeping it flexible reduces my everyday stress, even just a little bit. I try to start each day by taking a walk and listening to music or a podcast on spotify. A lot of the time, I end up listening to my favorite Broadway show tunes and practice acting through the song as

I walk. Honestly, this gets some weird looks from neighbors, but once I stopped caring about what they think, this turned into one of the most freeing parts of my day!

After walking and completing my online homework for the day, I usually practice singing. I've been trying to focus on songs that I have fun with, rather than specifically picking out audition pieces, which has surprisingly led to me finding some great audition songs in a no-stress way!

After singing, I move onto play readings. I have a goal to read a play every other day, which has been great because I've found so many new audition monologues without even looking for them! Whenever I can, I try to read these plays with my friends over Zoom. We each pick a character, and then read the plays aloud together. It's a great way to keep a sense of community with people who are a thousand miles away from me.

One of my favorite experiences during this time has been the Zoom reading with my fellow cast members of the play I was in that got cancelled. I was still disappointed that we won't be able to perform it in person, but it was so nice to be able to perform it, even though it was over Zoom. It was especially wonderful to get to see friendly faces again, and I absolutely loved the sense of community I felt when working with these talented people.

I highly recommend getting a group together and performing over Zoom. The act of creating theater in times like this is so comforting and satisfying, and can provide you with a sense of hope. Times like these can be very discouraging, but I hope that my story shows other theater artists that you can still be creative during a time that seems to stall creativity. Take a deep breath, and go forth and create!