

Transcript of Interview with Lian McMillan by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Lian McMillan

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 05/06/2021

Location (Interviewee): Toronto, Canada

Location (Interviewer):

Transcribed By: Angelica S Ramos

Abstract: Working multiple jobs including music making, being in the food service industry during the pandemic, and working as an usher for music performances. Negotiating online education while teachers were getting used to unfamiliar technologies, having to keep going to campus for performance aspects of the music degree, and how COVID-19 impacted finishing undergraduate degree. The intersections of environmentalism and the pandemic, single use plastics for food safety, vegetarianism, Indigenous sovereignty, and the Mi'kmaq fisheries. Worrying about family members in China. Receiving Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Getting vaccinated and the inequities of access in Ontario, Canada. Looking "healthy" on paper while managing chronic conditions, inaccessibility of mental health care through provincial insurance, medical bureaucracy, and the University of Toronto's student services. "Never really felt totally safe as a woman". Using public transit during the pandemic. Anti-maskers. The perils of strategic voting and its impact on which government officials ended up managing the pandemic. Police brutality, anti-Asian attacks. Resonances between her grandmother's experiences of the Depression and the potential aftereffects of the pandemic on this generation's future. Gratitude for partnership during the pandemic, as well as the difficulties of seeing one another.

Kit Heintzman 00:01

Hello.

Lian McMillan 00:03

Hi.

Kit Heintzman 00:05

Would you please start by telling me your full name, the date the time in your location?

Lian McMillan 00:10

Sure. So my name is Leah McMillan. It is May 6 2021. Roughly 2:07pm ESP and I'm in Toronto, Canada.

Kit Heintzman 00:27

And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike? Yes, I do. Lovely. Would you please start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this? What would you want them to know about you and the place that you're speaking from?

Lian McMillan 00:48

Sure. Um, yeah, I'm a 21 year old musician, I suppose. I just recently graduated from U of T, probably like a week ago. And I graduated with a classical percussion degree. I play for a band called cut sleeves. Were a group of East Asian queer femme musicians. I'm also I don't know, I guess I'm a mixed race. Woman. i My father's white and my mother is Chinese. I've lived. I lived in Canada, I've lived in the States. I've lived in Shanghai for few years. And and yeah, I don't know. dog owner. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 01:46

I'll come back to the dogs. That's great. I'd like to start by asking what the word pandemic has come to mean to you.

Lian McMillan 01:56

Sure, um, well, I pandemic before was, I suppose more of a abstract loosely. descriptor I suppose to describe, you know, some other things like to apply because I had never lived or experienced a specific medical pandemic, at least to this to this range. And then I, the pandemic, I think it was actually very delayed from where I was living, because I remember hearing about it for, you know, months, and originating, I suppose, in Wuhan. And I just, I remember, people following the COVID with trackers, and I remember the first to the couple coming to Canada, and I was like, oh, it's gonna be fine. We're all gonna be fine. It's gonna be okay. And then, all of a sudden, two weeks later on, like, you know, wearing a mask to go to 711 or something like that. And I think it was, I think it's always been super abstract for me, because I've been very privileged in the past year, where I live, you know, with my parents, and, I mean, I, I worked during the pandemic, so I definitely know how, you know, essential workers feel I remember that whole summer, last summer working in food service, and just just absolutely gone with people. But the pandemic now, it's, it doesn't even have any meaning to me anymore. Like, yeah, we're just living in like, in like, a life like, this is just life. It's not really some sort of, like, isolated event anymore. You know, it's just like, it's never like, the thing is, it's never gonna go away. So I don't know if that's like a definition of pandemic, but that's what pandemic has come to me to me, which means nothing.

Kit Heintzman 04:09

I would love to hear anything you're willing to share about your experiences of working in food industry during the summer.

Lian McMillan 04:18

Sure. Well, originally, I mean, I have a very love hate relationship with my job I've I've it's it's just you know, typical minimum wage foodservice job that I've held, I guess, going on six years. I got that job in high school is like my first you know, quote, unquote, real job. And it's kind of a, I don't want to say tighten it, but it's a it's a, there's only a very few employees there. And my boss who's the owner of the store, like he works very closely with, with the employees like he's there every single day. And so originally, I was like, oh, there's no way I'm going to work like it's a pandemic, I'm not gonna work. But then I honestly, well, because serve was coming out and it was only coming out if you like, make a certain amount. And so I was like, okay, but then you can't make over a certain amount. Plus my boss was begging me to come back, even though I don't understand why anybody needs frozen yogurt. And you know, like, okay, I get it, it's hot outside, but like, it's fears of yogurt like self serve frozen yogurt really like at the top of the list? I don't think so. But I am the longest like setting employee there. So he obviously likes to have people who are trained and know what they're doing. So I was like, Okay, I'll come back to work, but after big under a certain amount. So I still qualify for the government benefits. And so I was working a couple nights a week. Yeah, it was just Well, personally, especially before the pandemic, I was really

against, you know, single use plastic and stuff like that. And working in food service, I understand obviously, like with, even without epidemic, you need to be cleanliness, I understand. But just even the amount of pack packaging we're just consuming is just absolutely ridiculous. And so like I said, it's self serve frozen yogurt. So instead of having like a big communal topping thing, what we do is we had to package individual servings of each topping. And so we would have to do there for hours, like filling these different toppings and little sauce containers. And then you know, I have to sanitize the handles after everybody's used. I mean, to my boss his credit, he tried to make sure that we were pretty protected. Like we had a big like, glass or plastic partition. But it's it's a small space. So you know, if you need to do stuff, especially because it's self serve. People don't know how to use it. So you have to go over and help them or people are like, Oh, what's this, I've never been here before, and you have to go help them. And we also have a fair bit of like, the area where it's situated. It's a very wide range of customers. So we did get this like a few people causing like a really big disruption, some people who were technically banned from the store, you know, they come in and obviously not wearing a mask, trying to sell us a chair. I don't even know are just like small things like people would just Oh, I forgot. And I'm like, okay, so go outside and put your mask on and then come back inside. Or we had glove like plastic gloves that everybody had to put on. And then you know, they're just grabbing a handful and there's like, five gloves thrown across the floor. And it just hurts to know like, Okay, so that's just a waste of plastic right there. Have to clean up later. Got a lot of Uber orders, which I prefer because it's just like, easy to easy to handle don't have to deal with people directly. It was a really weird experience. Because other than that I was not like going outside to see anyone except for my partner. So I, I was like, Oh, I'm not seeing anyone. And I'm like, okay, but I'm interacting with like 50 people a day. Even if I'm double masking, and I had like a face shield, and I'm behind a plastic layer, and I was like, Oh my God. Yeah. And I mean, I got tested probably like once a month and didn't contract it. But it was it was so weird. I was like, I was like, I can't believe I'm here right now, like doing this at this moment. But you know, got to do what you feel to do. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 09:02

Would you tell me a little about what partnership has been like during the pandemic?

Lian McMillan 09:07

Sure. Well, my partner and I were together for probably, like six months or so before the pandemic started. And we actually lived together for a little bit at the beginning and it was like the best thing ever because we didn't have to go to we didn't have to go to school. We didn't have to go to work. We got to live together which was nice because we were living together so we spent probably like a week just like this one room together. And it was incredible. Just so like I was like oh, we don't have to worry about anything you just hang out. And then she had to move back home to her parents house which is like about an hour away and who We were like crying outside, we're like, I don't know if I'm ever gonna see you because like, obviously, the pandemic and we're like, and she has like a hard relationship with her parents. So we were just like, I can't believe, like, we don't even know when the next time we're going to see each other is or like crying outside like, what? Like I am. And then we saw each other week later. We were like, Okay, we get through this. And we were outside, of course. And her parents are like, yeah, so we, we, and then we did end up going about a month and a bit without seeing each other. And we FaceTime literally, like, probably twice a day. I had like an album of like, all the photos that we FaceTime together. And yeah, I mean, it's especially since we're pretty much only seeing each other. For the past like year, I still I have to go to school for my degree, because it's like, it's an in person thing. So I was lucky enough to be able to, like see some people, but it's just like, so it's I think a lot of people are either breaking up because they can't do like the really intense because it is intense. It's a lot of like, being with one person and talking to one

person all the time. But, I mean, luckily, we've been pretty good. Yeah, I don't know. It's weird, because we're just like, Okay, I guess we're gonna hang out and watch Netflix again. Like, there's nothing to do. Especially when it's cold outside. It's like, it's freezing. And we're just like, Okay, we can't sit outside. We can't go eat or food outside in a field or something. So. And now she's just moved a little bit further away. But luckily, we're both vaccinated. Now, so. Yeah, I don't know. It's, it's, I'm really appreciated, because I don't know what she or I would have done if we didn't have each other as well. Because, obviously, you know, if you have, if you're just like talking your friends all the time, you don't want to feel annoying. So at least there's like this one person that you're like, okay, like, we're together on this. So yeah, it's been nice. And now we've been together for a year and a half. So, yeah, that's pretty great.

Kit Heintzman 12:33

To the extent that you're comfortable sharing, would you say something about your experiences with health and healthcare infrastructure, pre pandemic?

Lian McMillan 12:42

Sure, um, I, I've been a pretty healthy person, luckily enough, but I also like, I really hate going to the doctor as well. So I haven't probably been to the doctor, like three years, because it was already like a year and a half that I had not gone before. Um, before, I could not go. Um, I mean, I still fall under my parent's insurance as well. So luckily, I've been very, very privileged. With the health care industry, I've definitely had friends who are not as lucky, even like right now trying to book their vaccinations, like not having an OHIP card or, you know, just other various things that are just like, it's come on, like, everybody should be, like, bigger, these are willing people who want to get vaccinated. They're working every single day. And yet, oh, because they're from Alberta, or because they're from like, somewhere else, or because for some reason, the website just doesn't accept their card or because they don't have a permanent address. It's like, all of these different ridiculous reasons just to get some patented vaccine. But yeah, I have personally, I have been very lucky with the healthcare industry. So I don't really have a lot to say, I don't have enough experience to speak on. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 14:14

Staying in the pre pandemic times, what was your day to day looking? Like?

Lian McMillan 14:22

Yeah, I'm, I'm a very busy person, very, like anxious, busy body, workaholic, type all the time. So pre pandemic, let's say I would probably wake up, take my dog for a walk. I'd go to school, maybe take like, two or three hours of classes. And then I would practice there for probably like, four hours, and maybe go to my partner's house, get some dinner and then maybe we'd go like, hang out with my friends or like go to a bar or I don't know, go to the library, something like that. And then I'd probably get home like 10pm. And then weekends, I would practice a lot of practicing having a band rehearsal. Like my weeks, were always like, I'm always glued to my calendar trying to fit in like every single thing. So it just became so empty for a bit, and then now it seems to be packed against them else. So yeah.

Kit Heintzman 15:23

What was the initial adjustment like to the sort of calendar schedule day to day life?

Lian McMillan 15:33

Well, first, there was like a nice little week where none of the teachers knew what they were doing. So I just got to sit around and do nothing and maybe fill out like, one form. It like the ending of the semester, because we really only had two or so weeks left before it was finished, when everything shut down. It was, so it was kind of a little bit more natural. It was just like an earlier summer than I was expecting to have. But then when everything got back, I was like, in September. I was it's been weird, because I still have to go to school to practice such because all the instruments there are not really transportable. Considering what I play. So I would like I'd have like two hours of class on my computer, go to school, practice, come home, and then do like two hours of class. It's been awful. I hate it because I hate going on. Well, I'm like already kind of a computer addict or like a phone addict. So when I go to class, or when I practice, it's like the time that I actually get to spend away from that and actually, like focus my brain on something other than like scrolling all the time. And then so now when I'm in class, I have to have my phone with me to scroll or do something because I'm just like, so like, I'll sit on this couch here for like six hours, go upstairs and get like some orange juice or something can come back down. The only reprieve is like going inside for a walk or something. Yeah,

Kit Heintzman 17:15

I know you spoke about this a little bit already, when you've sort of first heard about the pandemic and your reaction. So paying attention to the couple that entered Canada. I'm wondering if you would say anything more about your sort of initial reactions at the beginning? What drew your attention what that felt like?

Lian McMillan 17:32

Sure, I will. I remember. I don't remember the exact timeline. But I remember hearing about the outbreak in Wuhan. And I did you know, ask my mom about it, because I have like, half of my family is in China. And she's like, Okay, well, we'll hands like far from where you know, my family lives. And then you're just kind of hearing about that. And we're like, okay, the country is on lockdown. My grandmother there is like, she lives with my uncle. And he was like, okay, yeah, they're just staying in the apartment all the time. And I was like, Okay, well, it's, I don't know, I guess maybe I had too much trust and I don't know, the world. But I obviously remember it like slowly spreading and I had one friend and he, he was very on top of it. He's like, Oh my God, this, there's this thing coming. There's this whole virus like it's gonna be so awful. And he had this website tracking it. And I was like, we were in class. And I said to Sam, just put that away. I said, like, relax. It's going to be fine. And even I remember like, maybe in February, we were like oh Coronavirus, and I actually had a dance show and two of the members on my dance team were sick. And they're like it's not Coronavirus, because we don't have the flu. And I was like, okay, and then I got sick right after that. And then I went to class because I was like, it was midterm week, I had to go to class, I had to do a thing blowing my nose. Now I'm like, Oh, my God, I can't believe that I went to plus I can't believe that. We're all just like, still going around doing stuff. But we hadn't even heard. I don't I don't know when the couple of came into Canada. But I don't remember the timeline, but I don't remember what I was talking about. But yeah, I think I was just like, is a lot of like, whispers and worries about it. But like kind of joking about it. And I actually remember like, I think it was on the 13th of March was when I was I also have a job at school working as an usher. Which obviously has not been happening for the past year. But I was working a show. And that was like the day where they were like okay, Fridays. Last day that everything's happening or something, but, and I saw a text my boss was like, Are we still coming in for this opera show? And he's like, yeah, it's still happening. So I was like, okay, and we had gloves, but no face masks, and we're all using hand sanitizer, but nobody really knew what they were doing. They're just like, Okay, I guess we're protecting ourselves. And that show because opera, there's so many, like, elderly people coming to this show. And I said to my friend I was working with I was like, I can't believe they're all coming in right now. Because every at that

time, I was like, oh, it's all the elderly population. So and then they're all income all of these old people, and, and they're all coughing during the show. And it was just like, at the time, even I was like, Oh, my God, I can't believe they're here. Like I would, I was like, I would be so worried if I were them. And then I still had a shift the day after is like, there's no way that this shift tomorrow is happening. And of course, it did get canceled. But I just remember that was, it was just we were we were all during the show. We're all outside and we're looking at our phones about like reading all the emails from the DEA and then reading the news was like, Oh my God, why are we here? Right now we have to go over like hide under cover. So kind of went from like zero to 100 real quick. And like, two days or something like that? Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 21:18

Would you say something about how it was intuitive to you that when you're feeling sick, and it's midterm week, you go to class?

Lian McMillan 21:26

Sure. I mean, I think it's pretty natural for people to get sick, maybe one or two times a year, I usually get like a cough or cold in in the winter time. And like, it was it was midterm season. So I and I was like falling behind in this class because it was a very different elective than I thought it would be. I thought it'd be fun. But it was actually a very hard class. I got a very bad grade on the midterm or on the on the test before something just like okay, like, I got to go to this class. And I think I skipped one day, I skipped one day, because I only had one class. I was like, Okay, I took my one day off time for me to go back to class. And it was I was probably super disruptive as well, because I was coughing and blowing my nose everywhere. But I was like, it's pretty normal. Like, I think I still wanted to practice because I was like, okay, got a run through some things, at least make sure I don't feel like complete waste not doing anything. Yeah, I was really sick, actually.

Kit Heintzman 22:34

Yeah. This just shifting gears a little bit. So 2020 was a pretty big year. 2021 is also looking to not be particularly small in terms of world events and conferences with COVID-19. I'm wondering what some of the biggest issues on your mind have been over the last year and a half.

Lian McMillan 22:59

When you say issues, what do you mean?

Kit Heintzman 23:02

Anything in relationship to most people answer with politics, or political issue? Like if not like capital P politics, sort of political issues?

Lian McMillan 23:12

Sure. Um, well, I mean, I've definitely like I've had most of the issues on my mind since before the pandemic, a like police brutality was already an issue way before the pandemic. Anti Asian attacks were happening before the pandemic. Donald Trump was the president before the pandemic, Justin Trudeau was the Prime Minister before the pandemic, like a lot of these things are so pre existing and I, I've heard a lot of people say, you know, because now we have more time to actually focus on things that are happening. It's bringing a lot of people maybe to light, I guess, which is the privilege thing to not notice until now that these things are happening. I mean, my issues, I guess, before I like one of the biggest things on my mind was really environmentalism. For me, personally, like I

went vegetarian, and that was a really big thing. But like, honestly, now at this point, it feels kind of insignificant, because I just, I don't I also feel very helpless, because there's not really anything an individual can really do. And I really noticed how like, I think it's been especially like, with the pandemic, I think that like, a lot of you just really see how there's only like 12 companies that are controlling everything that's happening in this world. Yeah, I have also learned a lot which has been really great. I think, like I've learned a lot about how other things can sort of play benefit environmentalism. So it doesn't have to be just like, oh, focus on this focus on that. A lot of stuff is really like, like connected. So for example, indigenous issues is that their land is being taken away, has been taken away. And, and for example, like the I think it was the MiG ma fisheries in Nova Scotia. Like, because I've like learned that a lot of indigenous ways of hunting and ways of treating the land is much more sustainable than any Western, like than any Western food production way. So the thing we could do would be to start working a lot more with like indigenous communities and learning how they treat their land and how they do like farming and how they do hunting. Because for example, my issue with eating meat, for example, is I mean, besides me personally, just not like liking to eat an animal would be that I don't support factory farming, because I think it's very cruel. I don't think the actual issue is really eating meat. I think it's like how these animals are produced on a mass scale and using like all of these resources to, to just kill them, and then feed the back end and put them on on assembly line to get like, electrocuted. So I just think there's like a lot of things that we can learn from communities that have been silenced for a really long time. And I don't know, there's just like, I think I've also learned a lot, which has been really good, especially on social media. And I've also learned a lot about different people that I know and what they support, which is like, good or bad.

Kit Heintzman 26:56

I'd love to hear a little bit more. So you mentioned in the beginning of this answer, that there isn't much an individual can do within COVID-19. There's also the sort of tension of conversations about individualism and policy and structure. Would you talk a little bit about that?

Lian McMillan 27:14

Sure. Um, I think that like. It's hard. Because I think there's just an issue of like, morality to a lot of stuff where I'm like, okay, maybe one person going out to a restaurant is not a big deal, but and I'm like, Well, I would feel awful doing that. You know what I mean? So I think it's, I think it's, I, I just don't like it's like all or nothing, I don't think that okay, if what I'm doing isn't making a big deal, then I might as well not try and not do anything and order 100 pieces of clothes from Sheehan. Or I might as well go to an Airbnb party without new people. Like, I think that what's important is like the intention behind it and what people try. But I also think that it's really important that we at least, if we follow in with, let's say, we keep doing the whole democracy, political structure that we are currently in, then we need to elect people that will make sure that certain things are like, for example, Doug Ford, with the vaccine rollout is just like absolutely ridiculous. And I live in a quote unquote, hotspot zone, but I live in a like, I live with my parents in an area where all these people are able to work from home. And my friend lives in an area where everybody is, like, working very closely like food service or a different industries where they actually have to physically go into work, and she doesn't live in a hotspot zone. So like. I don't know, like I think individually, like people have to vote, no matter how fruitless it may feel. I don't know. I mean, I don't know how to answer that. Because I it's so it's so it's so hard. And from my personal opinion, is that like, it's I think you should just do as much as you can, as soon as one person, but also forgive yourself for things because sometimes you just need to take time for yourself. Because if you're not taking care of yourself that you can go out and take care of other people. So yeah.

Kit Heintzman 29:41

I'd like to invite you to say anything you would like about Ford.

Lian McMillan 29:48

I mean, I did not vote for him. I worked very hard to get my friends that were eligible to vote because one was like Was his election was it? Was it 2017? I want to say that it was I, from what I remember, it was one of the first elections that I was actually eligible to vote in. Maybe this is completely wrong. But I remember, it was like a lot, a lot of people that I know, have just never voted before because I believe the because I think the Prime Minister election, the first, the first one where Trudeau got elected, I was I was still 17. Like, that was the year where none of us were eligible to vote yet. So this was one of the first ones where I was like, okay, like, let's get on vote. But then also, a lot of people were like, oh, it's like a provincial one, whatever. So I took a few of my friends out to vote, tried to convince him to vote NDP personally, but it's hard, because a lot of people, for example, have parents who are influencing them in very specific ways. Where they're like, oh, we have to go with a safe option. Because like, NDP is not like, there's no chance they're going to get it. So we have to vote Liberal to be saved, because at least it's not Ford, or somebody thought or like, I know. That was hard. For me, I'm Doug Ford. I just like, I hate him. He's so awful. I don't know why people didn't learn from Rob Ford. I just, it doesn't make any it doesn't. It didn't make sense to me. I was actually like, gobsmacked when he was elected. I really hate everything that he's done with the education policies that he's made. Um, I don't know. I Yeah. That's all I have to say

Kit Heintzman 32:00

I'm gonna switch gears a little bit. Um, what does health mean to you?

Lian McMillan 32:08

Health is an interesting subject to me. Because on one level, maybe on like, on paper, I'm supposedly like a very healthy person. But there are, for example, like some chronic issues that doctors have not helped me with, that I have really wanted to get help with, they actually send me to a plastic surgeon. That was like this 85 year old man, when I really had like a lump that I didn't want in my body anymore. And I was like, this hurts me, why are you sending me to a plastic surgeon, who then tells me that the scar will be uglier than the lump. So I'm not going to remove it from you. And I was like, 17 years old. And I was like, my arm, my whole arm hurts, because there is this lump here. So it's just like, the small things are like, I've had like, very chronic issues for a really long time where I'm like, I don't want to live like this. But the doctor just, you know, gives me some sort of like, superficial thing, and then never follows up. Or another example is like I went to, I was having a hard time in first year, and I ended up getting sent to therapy by my dawn. Like the, the, like the RA, like the head of the like, dorm floor. And I went through a few sessions, and I actually really liked it. And then the therapist went on mat leave, and she got her replacement, and the replacement, cancelled our appointment, and then never followed up. So I just kind of never went back to therapy. And so like, we'd like to go back, but then also you just just health is hard, because on one hand, I'm like, Okay, I'm healthy, I'm doing fine. And like some days are better than others. But then also, I'm like, Please help me, you know? Or, yeah, I don't know, health is health is weird, especially when you have to help other people because you're maybe more high functioning than some other people. Yeah. And it's also hard. For example, when I, let's say, your parents don't really support, you know, therapy or something like that. Or they view it as like a very shameful thing. So you don't really have that support there. Or even like when you don't have time for it, I don't know. Yeah, it's health is weird.

Kit Heintzman 34:46

What are some of the things you would like for your own health and for the health of people around you, and what kinds of changes do you think would need to happen to make that possible?

Lian McMillan 34:57

Yeah, I think the health of the people around me definitely been a really big impact in my life, especially over the past few years, especially with mental health. I have a lot of people in my life who have suffered from various different mental issues. And it's really hard to watch and not have the tools to help and watch them not be able to get those tools that they need. Or even with a lot of my stuff comes back to the university just because that's where I've been for the past few years. Just with their awful handling of sexual assaults, their awful handling of the of therapy and how they hand hand out appointments, I suppose. Yeah, I think mental health has been one of the biggest issues that I've personally seen in my, in my immediate circle. And I think things that we can do to help is just, I don't know, I'm not like, I think just even educating people about what is accessible to them, for example, like I don't even know like, is it covered by Oh, hip? Or is this not covered by hip? Or? I think there needs to be more outreach with that. I think there needs to be more like earlier, like in high school, I think people need to be offered stuff while they're still learning ways to cope before it's too late. And they develop disruptive ways of coping with things. Yeah, and I mean, I just I don't like the idea of like relying on school because not everybody goes to school or not everybody has access to school. I think it has to be more government based. Yeah, I don't know.

Kit Heintzman 37:00

What does safety mean to you?

Lian McMillan 37:05

Hmm. I don't know. I've never really felt totally safe. And to be honest. As a woman, I Yeah. Yeah, I've never felt safe. Just walking anywhere, any time of day, helps to have people with me. But yeah, I don't feel safe ever.

Kit Heintzman 37:31

Thank you for sharing that. So there's this like really narrow discussion of safety related to COVID 19. Within that very small framework, what are some of the ways you've been negotiating? You've been deciding what feels safe or safer? And how have you been negotiating that with others.

Lian McMillan 37:57

Um, I think one way of negotiating safety has in my life has been deciding who and who not to see, for both of our benefit, which has been really unfortunate. With some people that I really miss. Safety i It's hard, especially like, for example, when you're in an academic space, and you need to interact with certain people that you may not have chosen to interact with. But you need to for your degree, and let's say they don't wear their mask all the time or stuff like that. I'm a big fan of the double masking, it makes me feel a lot safer. Safety, one of them. One of my biggest qualms, like over the past year has been about public transit, because I used to take public transit all the time. Because just for environmental reasons, and just for convenience reasons. And TTC has been really awful with that. For example, they have shuttle buses all the time, because they're closing the subway for, like 10 days at a time. And this is like on a weekday during week, peak hours. And you just you'd see all these shuttle buses filled with people, or people not wearing masks and the bus driver during like absolutely nothing about it. Especially on Saturdays when the anti Oscars go down to Queen's Park and that's the exact route that I take to get to school. So there'll be anti maskers on the bus afterwards handing out pamphlets or something like that. And so

one of my personal things have been driving more which I really don't like because I prefer not to drive but yeah, I think that's Yeah, one of the things for me.

Kit Heintzman 40:05

You had mentioned before the interview that you have a dog, would you say anything about cohabitation with your companion before, like, across the pandemic, how it's changed what it's meant to you?

Lian McMillan 40:19

Sure. Yeah. I've had my dog for a really long time. He's our family dog. But I'm like his person, you know, we actually adopted him when I was when we were still living in Shanghai. He's actually I think he's I think he, I think he's 11 years old this year. But he's still super, like excited. He's very healthy. He's a very, very healthy dog and very excitable all the time. It's been so wonderful having so much time with him. And we we moved houses during the pandemic. And before we didn't have a backyard or anything. And now we have a backyard. So it's been really nice to see him enjoy having a backyard again. It's nice, but it's also so hard to leave him now. Because he's so used to having all this time together here. This is the picture of him. His name is Woody. Yeah, he is so cute. I love him.

Kit Heintzman 41:24

How are you feeling about the immediate future.

Lian McMillan 41:29

Um, I'm feeling actually pretty hopeful. Because I just got my vaccine today. And I just graduated from university. And to this afternoon, I actually am doing a little showcase on YouTube. I learned, I guess, or extended my skills on doing like video editing, and filming and stuff. So I did like a really big project of my own volition. So I'm excited about that I applied to a few jobs. I'm starting a one year program in the fall. So I'm actually pretty. Pretty excited. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 42:13

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

Lian McMillan 42:19

Longer term future. Personally, I just want to keep hopefully staying in the music industry and keep working on creative projects. I love working on projects with people. So it's been really hard in the pandemic, in my band, because we haven't been able to have an in person rehearsal in a full year, which is really hard. And we released our EP during the pandemic. So I really want to get back together and creating new stuff. On the broader spectrum, I really hope that this kind of is learned people that treat other people with kindness and just maybe see things that are wrong in our system, hopefully, yeah.

Kit Heintzman 43:11

Would you expand a little on what publishing the EP was like, during the pandemic? And what you had said no, in person rehearsals, other online rehearsals, or did rehearsals have to stop entirely?

Lian McMillan 43:27

Sure. Um, so we had just completed recording the EP when everything hit. And because we had two different grant sources that we were using, we have to release the EP at a certain time. And also just because we've been working on music for a long time, so we wanted to release it. So we had to push back the release by few months, and we ended up doing some, like Instagram live events and trying to come up with some virtual ways to do things. And we ended up releasing it at the end of August and 2020. And we did get some, like media buzz, which was really nice. And we did some, you know, we've done actually a lot of virtual interviews, stuff like that. We have we've, I'm trying to think we we haven't had any virtual rehearsals, we've tried to like we do a lot of calls and we discuss things and stuff, but we don't, you know, sit down and play music because the it's just it's impossible, especially because there's five of us. It's it's just really not possible to get the timing. One, one thing we did is we played for the TIFF, next gen release party, and they asked us to do sort of like a live show and we're like, Okay, well, we can't do that. So we each recorded ourselves doing our part and then we sent it off to each other to like, kind of tack it on. And we did that sort of virtual performance. And we've written some songs, lyrically, but we haven't put them together. It's. And we've also just been all really busy with like school and work and stuff. Yeah, it's just it's so hard. And I think we're hoping with the summer coming, we'll be able to do some outside stuff.

Kit Heintzman 45:28

I'm curious, you've touched on this a little bit already. But if there's anything more you'd like to add, what are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last year and some change?

Lian McMillan 45:41

I'm taking care of myself. I know I actually I have been I definitely have been I, like I said, before the pandemic, I was really busy all the time. And I've definitely taken some time for myself. Trying to be like, Okay, once I hit this time, like, it's just it's done, like, you have to stop for the night and wait for the next next day to try again. I've also been sort of doing a lot of stuff that I want to do in terms of like, my schoolwork. And in terms of my like extracurriculars, instead of sort of doing. Maybe, like expected things, in terms of like music that I end up playing for my degree or topics for assignments that I want to do, I end up doing stuff that I'm a little bit more passionate about. Because then it gets me more interested in my work.

Lian McMillan 46:49

I've been showering more. Like, okay, I guess I'll take a shower. There's nothing else to do and feel good. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 46:59

This is my second last question. So we know that we're in this moment where there's a flurry of biomedical and scientific research happening around the issue of COVID-19. I'm wondering what it is you think people in the humanities and the social sciences can be doing right now to help us understand this moment?

Lian McMillan 47:26

I mean, I think the good thing is that a lot of this social movement, like all the humanities interactions are really happening online right now. And it's all being documented so quickly. And things are moving so quickly, but they're all like, right there. And you can see sort of how things trace and I think that like digital footprint is really important to be tracing, because I think that's where everything is happening right now. I'm not too well versed in humanities or anything like that. I think, well, my experience, at least in that sort of subject has been taking a lot of like art history classes, for example, or stuff, or cinema studies classes. And from what I've, one of the things that I actually really enjoy when I take those classes is learning how the real life stuff impacts the art and like

what is really like informing us stuff, because I'm not great at history. So then when something a TA will tell me like, Oh, like this was happening, and then so this inspired this to be created. I think that's really fascinating. So I think that is something really interesting to be paying attention to is maybe the art that's being created as well.

Kit Heintzman 48:45

And this is my last question. So this is an oral history interview. And I'm wondering if you could speak to some imagined history and in the future, one who never lived through this moment? What kinds of stories would you say matter to you and that you don't want to be forgotten by the historical record?

Lian McMillan 49:06

Sorry, because I feel like I've already forgotten so much stuff over the past year. What'd I say to his story, and you're fucking lucky you're not living here right now? I don't know. It's just weird that. Yeah, I don't know what to say. Because, for example, I think something like this will just impact us forever. Like when I see my, for example, my grandmother, she lived, she grew up in the Great Depression. She saves everything, like little pieces of food, like I'm talking like a tiny little crust corner. She will save it in her fridge to eat later. And I'm like that's, that was many years ago. She's 92 this year. And so it's just interesting to me to see like to wonder how this is going to impact us whether we like it or not. And our behaviors and I don't know what I would say to a future historian. But um yeah, I don't know.

Kit Heintzman 50:11

Thank you so very much for your time and your answers. And at this point, all of my questions are done. But if there's anything that you'd like to add that my questions haven't given you, the space to speak to please take that space now.

Lian McMillan 50:26

I think I'm good.

Kit Heintzman 50:29

All right. Thank you so much.