



## Season 2, Episode 1: We Create Our Homes – with Bindlestiff Studio

Michelle Lin: On Saturday, June 11th 2022, join us, Kearny Street Workshop, at the San Francisco Mint for “To Imagine Is To Exist”: an evening of art, live music and performances, delicious drinks and food, celebrating 50 years of KSW and Asian Pacific American arts. It’s going to be an amazing night full of community love and good vibes, and the best part is: all proceeds are going to support our empowering programming for Asian Pacific American artists in the Bay. Please visit [kearnystreet.org/KSW50](http://kearnystreet.org/KSW50) to reserve your tickets. We hope to see you there.

[music]

Michelle Lin: Welcome to We Won’t Move, A Living Archive, a podcast series and Kearny Street Workshop about Asian Pacific American artists of the past, present, and future whose stories shape the movements and dreams of San Francisco. I’m Michelle Lin, writer and arts and cultural worker.

Kazumi Chin: I’m Kazumi Chin, poet, scholar, and educator.

Dara Del Rosario: And I’m Dara Del Rosario, arts worker with a double Taurus and Gemini rising. Yes, that’s correct. Yes.

Michelle Lin: You had to think about it for a second. You’re like, is that good?

Dara Del Rosario: I did for a second.

[laughter]

Michelle Lin: Kazumi and I are not sharing because we would like to remain mysterious. So we’re actually Scorpios so that tracks.

[laughter]

Kazumi Chin: Mysterious.

Michelle Lin: Mysterious mystery. And this is officially season two of We Won’t Move, a Living Archive. It’s been amazing and we thank everyone so much for your support for season one. Excited to bring the chaos back for another season.

[laughter]

Michelle Lin: And we’re also so excited to have our first episode be about our beloved and long-time Kearny Street Workshop community partner, Bindlestiff



Studio. Dara, could you share more about Bindlestiff to our friends who might not be familiar?

Dara Del Rosario: I sure can. Originally opened in 1989, Bindlestiff Studio became the only permanent community-based performing arts venue in the nation dedicated to showcasing emerging Filipino American and Pilipinas artists. Bindlestiff Studio provides the often-underserved Filipino American community access to diverse offerings in theater, productions, music, and film festivals workshops and directing, production, acting, standup comedy, and writing, as well as children and youth theater programs. Bindlestiff Studio cultivates artists who reflect and celebrate the diverse value, traditions, and histories of Pilipinas and Filipino American cultures through bold artistic expression and community engagement.

Kazumi Chin: Yeah. So for our show today, we had the opportunity to chat with Bindlestiff's managing director, Oliver Saria and artistic director Aureen Almario about how they got involved with Bindlestiff, a little bit about Bindlestiff's history, and the way that they pivoted in the pandemic from the more arts-based programming to actually doing direct services, helping out elders in the community, raising funds for artists and such to make sure that we can all get through this pandemic together safely and make sure we have the resources that we need to do so. And so a lot of the conversation you'll hear is about that, but I guess first we wanted to talk a little bit about our reflections on it and kind of just warm you up a little bit, I suppose.

[laughter]

Dara Del Rosario: Yeah. The biggest one that came up for me was just like thinking of, when they were talking about Bindlestiff and I was like, oh, it feels like home. Like it feels like a creative home for them. And I started thinking about like, because I describe Kearny Street Workshop as my creative home, right? And I've been trying to understand what that means. Like, what does it mean to have a home, a creative home? When is that moment where it's no longer just a space? And we talk a little bit about it but like in my own reflections I think about how when we just get to hang out and be with one another and we're not just limited to just being colleagues or volunteers but like really getting to know one another's artistic journey but also like personhood, I guess. Yeah. Go ahead.

Michelle Lin: Something they named that I felt like I related to it very much as also someone who calls KSW a home and KSW has done so much with Bindlestiff in the past. We've had events in their venue and in their black



box theater. We partner with them in other events and just like we're in the same circles in the communities too. That one thing that I really connected with was them talking about how like it's more than just yes, the really amazing, beautiful, powerful art events that get put on. It's more than that though. It's everything that is put into putting a show together and also the after parties. They talked about that, and we kind of joke about it and were laughing about it, but that's kind of part of the whole process. Like I think of being an artist in this community isn't just about the product. It's about when we come together and celebrate each other and cheer each other on and then just kick back in the office. Or now in the pandemic, it's like Zoom. Like, how do we continue to stay connected and share love with each other. And I think about that so much and how so much lands on home being where we are and the people themselves and their relationships and how it's so important, like these community ties are so important so that when something like a global pandemic hits in a place that is predominantly like an arts venue space, how they can then almost -- it almost felt so natural and organic. It made sense. They said like they did what they had to do and it made sense to just pivot into social services. Being an arts organization and then looking through their social services partners that already have this infrastructure in place and be like, so how do we serve? What do we need to do now? Like we're artists and stuff. We work in the theater. But then how do we coordinate grocery deliveries to seniors which is what Bindlestiff has done with their volunteers through this pandemic.

Dara Del Rosario: Yeah. I think it's also clear too that like when we talk about community in these physical spaces, it's not just like artists. It's also like friends of these artists. It's also the neighborhood folks who come by in these spaces who have continuously uplifted and championed creative spaces and creative hubs. And so I think it's also our responsibility as artists to take care of the same community that shows up for us consistently. And like yes, we're artists. I don't know a lot of things around social services and direct actions like that, but I know that we can partner with someone who might have those skillsets and those knowledges. Yeah.

Michelle Lin: I love that.

Dara Del Rosario: I really love this conversation.

Michelle Lin: Right. It's like we have all the tools we need, right? Especially leaning on each other. And we can make it happen. We can take care of each other. I mean, I wasn't expecting so much of our conversation to also be about the history, like the early history of Bindlestiff, but I thought it was so



important that it came up and we spent time talking about it because this idea of them actually losing their first space and it being demolished and how, like I think Oliver even said it made them nimble. It almost prepared them for moving into a pandemic where it's also uprooting and distancing.

Kazumi Chin: Well, I mean, if you talk to Nancy about KSW too, that's what she says all the time. She talks about how moving from space to space teaches you how to be mobile and how to survive in the city in that way. And I think so much of, I don't know, the history of art spaces is having to do that in the same way that Filipino people being displaced in general, the community has to deal with that. And I think when we say something like the home that we make is the people gathering together, that's the kind of way that we create space even in the absence of physical space. And learning how to do that and learning how to elaborate on community as the ties themselves and not the space is I think a really vital strategy, a very vital theory, a very vital way of just putting into practice this mode of survival. And that's something I've really been taking away just hearing all these different stories over the past few years that I've been gathering from folks doing this kind of organizing work. Like a lot of it comes down to that mobility and your adaptability, and I think it's really cool how they were able to build out the structures to take care of folks because of what was already in place. Like Oliver mentioned, sometimes it can feel like organizing comes out of nowhere, that some of his opinions just kind of like happened, but a lot of the structures that are in place that they were able to tap into in the pandemic were there because of the constant organizing that people have been doing. And I think it really is important that we're highlighting that and allowing Oliver and Aureen to speak on how those structures are functioning.

Michelle Lin: Mm-hmm, for sure. I mean, it was just filled with so much hope and possibility.

Dara Del Rosario: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I really love this conversation. To be on it, what a great way to start the season and especially after a few months of not recording and just kind of we haven't been meeting as frequently because we're not in podcast creation mode and it just, this episode feels like a hug.

Michelle Lin: Yeah. We enjoy this a lot. We hope you do too. Thanks for listening.  
[music]

Oliver Saria: My name is Oliver Saria. I'm the managing director of Bindlestiff Studio, and Bindlestiff Studio is a black box theater located in the south of



market. We are the only professional black box theater in the country dedicated to showcasing Pilipinas, Filipino American performing arts. The theater itself has been around since 1989 and then it converted to a Filipino run space in the late '90s, early aughts and at this point we're the longest-running black box theater in the district. And we're the primary performing arts venue of the Pilipinx Filipino Cultural District. So my first foray into the space was actually as an audience member. I was checking out a college friend of mine who was actually performing in Jason Bayani's play, [Passion]. I remember what it was called. I believe it was closing night. I went to see my friend. Her name's Michella. Michella invited us to hang out afterwards and that's when I met OGee Gonzalez. He brought out his drum set and I had just started learning to play drums. I got a tax return and bought a drum set and me and my family were playing in my uncle's living room just for fun. And then it just so happened that we heard from OGee about this new Asian American music festival that they were starting at Bindlestiff called [Konoispop]. And so we're like, oh cool. We didn't even have a name at that point. So we named ourselves Bandsilog.

[laughter]

Oliver Saria: That's just a play on Filipino silog breakfasts and how everything is a silog so we just called it Bandsilog. And I wore a hat with a fried egg on it.

[laughter]

Oliver Saria: And I bought a used Royce drum set and I scratched out the OY to make it spell out rice.

[laughter]

Oliver Saria: That was the Bandsilog part of it. So it was just kind of a joke. But we ended up getting in the festival and that was the first time we played at Bindlestiff and it was the first of many times we ended up playing. And eventually we changed our name to something slightly more serious. We were called the Skyflakes after the cracker, the Filipino cracker. So that was kind of my first intro to the space. And then after that night I just signed up for all the workshops that were being offered, everything from standup to stilt walking to mask making and then improv and what would eventually become our stories-high workshop series, so the very first iteration of that. I believe it was called "Back-to-Back". It was just these short sketches. And I mean, decades later I haven't left. And in 2015 I became the managing director.



Dara Del Rosaria: Right on.

Michelle Lin: Thank you so much for sharing. I love learning about all that. That was amazing. And then I can't wait to bother Jason to learn more. The show is called, what, Passion?

Oliver Saria: Passion, [Inaudible].

Michelle Lin: Oh my gosh. Jason never mentioned this to us. And for those who don't know, Jason Bayani is the Artistic Director of Kearny Street Workshop. But yeah, those are all just amazing, amazing stories.

Kazumi Chin: It's nice to hear the connection too between Jason back then and Jason now and how it comes through Bindlestiff as well.

Michelle Lin: Yeah. So many people are tied through Bindlestiff. And Aureen, do you mind sharing a bit more about yourself, how you came to Bindlestiff?

Aureen Almario: Yeah, sure. So I'm the artistic director. I'm Aureen Almario. And how I found Bindlestiff? Same with Olly. I had a friend that was doing the poetry workshop with Patty [Kuchaparo], and he invited us, a bunch of my friends, to go see the final like poetry reading and that was the first time I stepped foot in Bindlestiff. That was like summer of 2003 and that was the same year that the old space was scheduled to be demolished. So from that time -- and then I ended up going to SF State. I transferred to SF State that fall. So that fall was just like catching all of the Bindlestiff shows that I could, all the music shows. I saw Skyflakes. And I watched a lot of Golda Supernova shows and the very last show I watched twice. I just fell in love and then yeah, but unfortunately it was going to be demolished that year or that December. I was able to also participate in some of the workshops. Yeah. It felt like everything was buzzing at Bindlestiff. It just felt like such a hub of so many things. Jessica Hagedorn was there for a reading and there was just so many things happening and it was just amazing, and it was sad that it was torn down that year. And then when it reopened in 2004 and Natoma, I signed up for, like Olly, I signed up for all the workshops and did my first story time in 2004. And like Olly, I never left. Yeah. I did everything. Shadow puppetry. I also did stilt walking with Lorna. Standup as well. It was great because all of the OGs at the time would come back and teach the newer folks and I felt like I was part of that generation from the Natoma Alley.

Dara Del Rosario: From the very first show that you all have seen until now, it sounds like Bindlestiff is very much your creative homes in a way. And I wonder,



when was that moment where you realized like, oh, this is a space where I can thrive and experiment. Was there a specific moment or memory where you were like oh, this is the place?

Oliver Saria:

I think it was really the moment I set foot in it. Like, it was different than any other venue I had ever seen anything in. I mean, the fact that to this day we're still the only professional black box theater that's doing this for the Filipino American community speaks to just the dearth of spaces for this to happen. And even though eventually I moved to LA and there's a very active and committed, passionate artist space of Filipinos in LA, coming from Bindlestiff and coming from the Bay, it just didn't feel quite the same. There is such a strong community component to it that you just can't -- it's difficult to find that in other places even in large Filipino communities elsewhere. And a lot of it frankly is kind of happenstance. We were there because Lorna immigrated. Lorna Chui, Lorna Velasco, Lorna Chui Velasco, she immigrated from the Philippines to Natoma which is a block away from Bindlestiff and she started studying with the original founder of Bindlestiff, Chrystene Ells, and started taking her workshops. And eventually she had a one-woman show at the age of 18 that attracted Allan Manalo, Joyce Juan Manalo who would eventually become kind of the first directors of Bindlestiff, Filipino directors of Bindlestiff. Tongue in a Mood, they brought their sketch comedy troop there, and it at that time it was so underground and DIY, you just felt like it was just a magical place and we really could do anything we wanted. This was before we were a 501(c)(3). This was before there was any kind of -- there wasn't any inclination or any inkling that it would become an institution. It was just pure raw creativity and people wanting to do stuff. And there was really no forethought after. And again, going back to happenstance, we were kind of forced to respond to the moment when the redevelopment agency bought the space and planned for a development at that location and effectively displaced us all. So I mean, we'll go into it later when we're talking about the pandemic, but like everything in our history in a sense prepared us to be nimble and to just respond to the moment and not necessarily be bogged down with what's going to be the next step after that? We were just like we just need to do this, whatever this happened to be at that moment.

Aureen Almario:

Yeah. I think home is the word for me. I didn't get to define what Bindlestiff meant for me but I think that's what it was. It was also my playground. I felt like when I was outside of Bindlestiff, the whole weight of the world, like my own personal stuff I was going through at that time, but once I stepped into the theater, I felt all of that lifted and then I could



just be my authentic self and get to be an artist. Because since I was a kid, I knew I wanted to be an artist. I wanted to be a visual artist but somehow, I found performing arts even though I was very shy. Everybody was so welcoming at the theater. So it was one thing to like see the performance and that was the reason that I sort of kept coming back. I think it was the very, very last show. Everybody was in that show. But it was so powerful and it was so sad because it was the last show. It was a bunch of vignettes but oh my gosh, that just blew my mind and just how all these people were crying at the end when they were bowing for the last bow, at the last space, and you just felt it. You just felt this energy from all the performers and what Bindlestiff meant to them. And as an audience member, that transcended to me. And there was one thing about the performance that just felt, it didn't feel like it was just a performance. There was something deeper that I connected with and especially as a Filipino watching other Filipino artists, talking about things that related to me or things that I found funny, that basically changed my life. It was so powerful that it changed kind of the direction of my life because for so long I wanted to be a visual artist. And then the community aspect that Olly was mentioning, so after the show like just the folks around the theater and sort of the afterparty I guess and folks were having a jam session and just like art was still happening after the performances. Now I look back and it's so magical. It was such a great performance and last day of the show that like I said, it was unfortunate that that was sort of the last time I got to see something at the original space. But I think we tried to rebuild something and tried to continue to emulate that in the future generations of Bindlestiff.

Kazumi Chin: Yeah. I guess it's interesting to think about what the change in venue means for you all. What the change to being a non-profit means. How do you continue to do Bindlestiff stuff after being displaced? How do you continue to do Bindlestiff stuff after needing to become a non-profit to survive? What are the challenges that you've seen and how have you addressed that, I guess? At some point we do want to talk about the pandemic, but maybe this is helpful to then get to that point first? So I think that's my question.

Michelle Lin: Yeah. I do agree that's important to think about.

Dara Del Rosario: Mm-hmm.

Oliver Saria: Yeah. So I can speak a little bit more about that because I was part of that first net cohort that was part of that effort to get from this strictly underground loose collection of artists and to becoming an actual





501(c)(3). It was something that we had to do. We knew that we weren't going to give up on the space regardless of what was happening with redevelopment. But then we knew we had to, in a sense, just mature really quickly in order to be able to negotiate with the city, to marshal support from the supervisors and local politicians. But the thing that we always were certain of and we were always clear about was that the community, particularly the media community within SoMa, had our backs. They really stepped up for us. Folks like [indiscernible], [indiscernible], they really helped shepherd us through that process. And to this day has some of the Filipino cultural district which by the way, that was a two-decade long effort. That took a long time. I think people think it just popped up but there was advocacy around that that was going on for decades. And that's just kind of the work you don't see. And in a sense, it's similar to what people see at Bindlestiff is what's presented on stage but what really is the core of it and what keeps sustaining it is this just stalwart undaunted core community support. And for the longest time we were entirely volunteer run. Even in those early days when we became a 501(c)(3), so much of it was volunteers just not wanting to let this place die. And a lot of it was, there wasn't really many options. In a way, this was before the internet or before social media. Now it's a little different. Someone can just kind of post something on TikTok and then get like a lot of followers and do cover songs in the bedroom and become really popular. So it's a little bit different now but there's still always this need to be among a community of artists and we are, on top of that, embedded in a community that's really invested in its survival and its history in the city. I mean, we see what's going on around us, the gentrification and the displacement and in a way, we feel like a community under siege, but within that there's still a lot of creativity and joy.

Aureen Almario: Yeah. I just wanted to add like I think, because I saw when the original space was closed down and the whole building was demolished and we were in Natoma and at Natoma we were also kicked out and then there was a period where just didn't have a permanent space. And I think what really sustained us was the community of artists that we had that just wanted to keep creating together and I think that's what kept it going. And honestly, it wasn't so much about the space. That's what I realized. It was the people that really made it what it was.

Dara Del Rosario: I love that. And I also feel like this is a perfect segue into thinking about when the pandemic first really hit in 2020, early 2020, and physical spaces had to be shut down, can you speak to maybe then officially pivoting to anything you were doing virtually or I know that there was a lot



of ways that you pivoted programming to support community members in different ways that you wouldn't before but like art events or programs that were happening in the space?

Oliver Saria: So I was actually in the space when we first heard inklings about things shutting down. I forgot what exactly we were doing at the time. I think a few of us were there when the NBA shut down and we were like oh my God, what is happening? This is so strange. But in the back of our minds we were thinking, oh, well, I guess we'll postpone things for a month or two.

Aureen Almario: I remember it was like two weeks. Remember?

Oliver Saria: Yeah. So I thought like okay, maybe in two months we can start up again and our calendar will be salvaged somehow. I mean, of course, no one had any idea that two years into it we're still officially closed to the public. But when it first happened --

Aureen Almario: Well, we were closed already. Remember, Olly?

Oliver Saria: Yeah, yeah.

Aureen Almario: We had [inaudible].

Oliver Saria: Yeah. I was about to mention that. In a weird way, we were kind of mentally already prepared for our space being closed because we actually had a lot of water damage that we hadn't known until December 2019 when we first realized that the water damage was so extensive that we had to shut down and essentially gut the theater. So there was major renovation happening. We were already closed. But again, in the timeline of getting it fixed we figured we could still open up again and we were already finding alternate spaces for the artists that had booked stuff there. So in a way, we were already, okay, the space is closed. We're not going to be having shows. So when things really shut down when San Francisco and the Bay Area actually had that announcement that we were sheltering in place, that's when we basically took everything we had in the theater and donated it to the community. Literally everything we could give away that we thought could be useful we donated it to UP. And UP, United Play, they distributed it to vulnerable families and that kind of got the ball rolling and us really pivoting towards more direct community services. And I can let AI speak about that because I mean to her credit. AI really held it down. AI and Dave Ragaza, another stiffy that really stepped up during the pandemic. I mean, once that started, then it kind of



mushroomed into a lot of other activities that we were doing. But yeah, Al can kind of speak on that.

Aureen Almario:

Well, yeah. So like Olly mentioned, so we had a bunch of facility issues that made the theater shut down some of our programs and our shows. And I remember the phone call from Olly actually when we shut down. Olly was like, we should help our seniors and we can bring them groceries. I remember that phone call vividly because that was the day that everything shut down. And then I was like yeah, let's do that. But logistically I don't think we knew exactly how it was going to happen until there was this whole SoMa coalition that was happening and we were meeting every week to talk about how to help our community, specifically the seniors, and it was really those folks that sort of brought everybody together. So UP, West Bay, [indiscernible], SOMCAN, they all because they were already doing direct services so they were the ones that kind of pulled everybody together and they were the ones that started the weekly food deliveries through the food bank. And so we just first started off as just volunteering because Olly and I were part of that community leader weekly meeting. And then we spread it out to our artists or volunteers and they started volunteering as well. And when school reopened, so this is how Bindlestiff sort of picked up the coordination of the food deliveries, as schools reopened, so all of the community organizations that needed to go back to do after-school programs or youth programming, they had to do that so they couldn't do the food deliveries anymore. And so I ended up taking on the coordinating role, coordination role I suppose, and then Dave ended up doing it later on. But we didn't know how long it was going to last and I'm like thinking, first it was like okay, just until fall or just until July at first and then it kept moving and moving and the pandemic just kept going and going. So we kept it going for at least, yeah, I think we ended it in September 2021 but it started in April 2020, so a little over a year.

Oliver Saria:

But around that time when it was starting to wind down was when more of these incidents of anti-Asian violence were in the news and again it was our seniors that bore the brunt of a lot of that anxiety just like the pandemic. So as things are starting to open up more, we were starting to reengage with them a little bit more in person but they were also afraid to leave their homes because of all the attacks that were happening. So then we started to pivot towards launching a senior safety transport program called [indiscernible] which in Tagalog means drop off and pick up. And so essentially, we were picking up and dropping off the seniors that we were once delivering food to, we were now essentially delivering



them back and forth to events in the SoMa; like literally door-to-door and driving them to and from the space. So we just found ourselves just trying to respond to the needs that we were seeing. And I mean, just to be clear, we were doing what we could but in a lot of ways we were just supporting a lot of the great work that the people in the community already were doing, folks like UP, West Bay, SOMCAN, [indiscernible] Inequity Center. So they already had that infrastructure and that institutional knowledge on how to get food from the food bank and whatnot and so we just stepped in where we felt we could and a lot of the Bindlestiff volunteers, they did the bulk of the deliveries. So I don't want to overstate what we did. We were definitely in a support role. But as an art organization, this definitely was not in our wheelhouse so we just tried to do the best we could in the midst of a global pandemic.

Aureen Almario: I remember you had a meeting with [indiscernible] Inequity and West Bay because we were transferring the coordination to me essentially and I just remember they were saying acronyms. I just do theater. I'm trying to help. I know how to do spreadsheets so yeah.

Dara Del Rosario: I feel like as you all were talking, it really just -- I was like that's what collective care looks like. Like it's a whole network and group of folks working together. And I think sometimes I hear the word collective care thrown around but as you all were talking, I'm like oh, that's what it means to embody this is or to be part of a larger web of community folks, right? To care for one another in a pandemic. No one expected that a pandemic was going to happen, right? So I appreciate you like also uplifting the fact that this wasn't just an isolated or isolated project but it was part of something greater and something bigger. So with everything that's happened with all of these initiatives to care for others, I also want to bring it back to personal care. Like how have you all been able to carve out time for rest and care for yourselves? Because as community leaders, I think sometimes, and I'm talking mostly like I don't mean to put experiences or anything like that, but like I think there's sometimes a pressure to be on all the time and oftentimes people turn to you for solutions or answers and I'm just curious to know, how do you also find time to care for yourselves and also to rest?

Oliver Saria: Rest. Yes.  
[laughter]

Oliver Saria: I don't know. I think we had talked about it like on the one hand we didn't have to be at the theater every weekend for a whole slate of shows so in



a sense we welcomed that break. But we felt as busy as we had ever been and so our schedule still felt pretty impacted. On top of this more direct community service, we also still did as much as we could creatively to put shows online and we even had a benefit show. We started an artist relief fund to help artists in need and our fundraiser, our online fundraiser, Okay Na Ba Tayo, Are We Okay, which means are we okay in Tagalog. That was geared toward really helping specifically the artists in need. So there was still this need to create so not just doing direct services. People needed that space to connect still through the sense of a community of artists helping each other. For me, that still added a lot of pressure and whatnot but that was rejuvenating as well still being able to do the art, and to do the art in a way that still felt safe however you define safe for yourself at this time. And then doing it in a way where you didn't have to be at the space at a specific time, that didn't make things easier. And for me, it's been a fruitful artistic time so in that sense I do feel rejuvenated in that sense. The pandemic did give me time to work on things creatively that I don't know that I necessarily could have the way my life was structured so much in the space having to be at the space. So yeah, I think for me there was at least that benefit.

Aureen Almario:

Yeah. I agree with Olly. Like, the pandemic actually let us take a break because we were doing back-to-back, back-to-back shows. We were always in the theater. Our schedules were jam packed. For me personally, I was teaching in like five different places and then I had the senior program or I had a youth program and then I had to do shows. So it felt like I could finally breathe and it was the only time I think I was able to do self-care was during the pandemic because the weekly food deliveries, the reason why we kept it going for so long was because it was only once a week. It was a lot of work, especially when we didn't get enough driver volunteers. But those were not as frequent so it felt manageable actually to do that kind of work. It felt like I could do it. It was within my capacity. It didn't take too much of my time. It just took one day of my time which was like Thursdays which was like, don't talk to me. But other than that, I became a plant hoarder. I started cleaning my apartment. Things I couldn't do. I was so unhealthy just with every aspect of my life, just everything felt so toxic before the pandemic because I didn't have any time for myself. Yeah, just really bad sleep schedule, eating schedule, all that and it felt like nonstop. I remember in 2019 I was like, when do I get to pause and just be able to not be in production? And it's starting to pick up now. There's some productions



coming up. So I'm like, oh, it's feeling like before pandemic. Rehearsals back-to-back and yeah.

Oliver Saria:

Yeah. So I think in a way with a lot of people, they kind of reevaluated how their life was structured pre-pandemic, and moving forward the big question is what's going to stay the same in terms of during this pandemic? What from this are we going to try to retain to just make it seem more manageable for us? But at the same time, there is this strong desire in the community to come back into the space and among the artists. They certainly want to do things again in front of an audience which is both refreshing and, in a sense, a little bit daunting just seeing that our schedule is looking like again going back to back-to-back productions like one after another. There's definitely that need to come together and do that. But I think we really have to ask what's sustainable. What can we continue to do? And maybe a lot of what we do is still online more and there are aspects of that that we keep. Yeah. And then just getting back to your question about self-care, I think there have been really beautiful moments where people have been there for each other in any way they could even over just Zoom. Like I remember the first kind of online show we had. We had kind of a Zoom green room and we just tried to kind of recreate that feeling of being together in the space after a show. And I remember it being really just nice to see people's faces and just knowing they're okay and people being really vulnerable with each other. That was always the case with Bindlestiff but I think in the midst of the pandemic I do feel closer to people.

Aureen Almario;

Yeah. And I think the artists, like as leaders we didn't, as me and Olly are the directors or whatever, artists were meeting on their own too. They were collaborating together. They were doing things outside of the Bindlestiff programming and Bindlestiff shows, so they wanted to keep it going. And if it wasn't for those meetings that folks were having on Zoom, we wouldn't have had this one of our artists who got sick during the pandemic and that was sort of the Okay Na Ba Tayo show so he was one of the folks that we were thinking about when we were fundraising for that. But it was because of a Zoom meeting where the other folks saw that this person was getting really sick and we all pretty much like that night had to drive and take this person to the emergency room. So I think staying connected really, even though it's not the same, we still miss the physical social aspect of being together, but the Zoom type of stuff also helped with isolation and the stuff that was happening, and also presented ways to expand our community like we were able to collaborate with artists outside of the Bay.



[music]

Announcer:

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