

Title: Light-Workers

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After the virus was managed, it became evident that nothing would be the way it was before.

During the months where stages were bare and audiences stayed home, we learned just how dire the need for accessible art was. As we stayed confined within our walls, we finally understood what it was like to be trapped. We realized we had taken the freedom to go out and see a show for granted. We realized that some never got this chance, maybe because they were sick, or their theatre's weren't accessible, or money stood in the way of purchasing a ticket. We realized the severity of those challenges when we stood in their shoes and felt as though we grasped for art and caught air instead.

We sought community online as we waited. We read plays, sang songs, and talked to friends, all while experiencing a vast distance we hadn't known before. But now that our freedom was returning, we learned that the community we tried to find when we felt alone could exist in-person *and* online. As sets were crafted again and seasons were planned, we finally stopped seeing the act of sharing art outside our theatre's physical walls as an inferior experience or as a damaging practice to the art. We decided that an audience's geographical location should not inhibit their ability to participate in a shared theatrical experience.

Writers looked inward during their time away from the world they knew. During the quarantine, we didn't just contend with a virus. We also saw public acts of racism become visible to millions of people. After months of isolating, thousands of people gathered in major cities to speak out against police brutality. Writers, especially writers of color, so deeply felt an intense surge of solidarity, heartbreak, and love, that they couldn't help but let it inform their work. The stories they created resonated with readers and audiences who had experienced their own trials. When people finally flocked to see real people again on stage, they experienced the same catharsis as the characters did in their search for community. And as they watched, they felt grateful to be present with each other again.

But what did the dramaturgs do? What did they do when they worked on plays whose futures were uncertain? How did they keep moving forward?

They got to work.

They realized how important the new writing would be and sensed the vulnerability within the writers they worked with. The new stories that sprung forth from them were raw and unfiltered; through empathy and audience-awareness, the dramaturgs guided these plays into our changed world.

We would never be the same again, but that's okay. We learned to accept our collective metamorphoses, and we healed together as a result.