

INTRO

(The following is read by Laura Colby over jazz music composed by Manual Cinema)

Hi, I'm Laura Colby and this is *The Middle Woman*, a roadmap to managing the performing arts. I'll be sharing personal anecdotes from my 30 years in the field, exploring the nitty gritty and the technicalities of this job. I'll tell you the story of how I got here and what it's taken for me to work in the industry of the performing arts.

--

EPISODE 21

LAURA COLBY: Hello, this is Laura Colby, founder and president of Elsie Management. And today I am here to speak about when things go wrong. And I'm excited that both Anna Amadei, Elsie's Vice President.

ANNA AMADEI: Hello.

LAURA: And Jimena Alviar, Elsie's Contract Manager.

JIMENA ALVIAR: Hi.

LAURA: Are both here with me.

When I started what was a small business 30 years ago, I had no idea about what the insurance industry refers to as risk liabilities. I had no idea the level of risk that this industry has.

I'm here to shed some light on my experience of 30 years in the business and some of the things that have happened to me that are frankly just business expenses. Ultimately, when things go wrong, when there's a force majeure, when someone makes a mistake and it costs you money, it's just a business expense. And the first time I wrapped my brain around that really helped me as a small business owner understand that, oh, I needed to be financially prepared for these unexpected expenses.

So you don't know what you don't know. I mean, I had never experienced a force majeure incident. I had never had someone delete my entire database. I had never had someone program a date in the completely wrong season that the date was programmed for. Like I had no experience in any of that. But now that all of those

things have happened to me, I know what the true cost is to my business. And I also know that one of our practices here at Elsie Management is to be brutally frank with our artists, and it's actually written into our representation agreements: *you are prepared for force majeure events*, which means you are prepared for the financial risk that a force majeure in particular could cost you. But also, if someone just ups and makes a human mistake as your company manager and flies you into the wrong city or into the wrong airport on the wrong day, because yes, that has happened.

So this episode, I hope, will reveal coping mechanisms and solutions and frankly an attitude and a way to approach all of this because you'll never sleep if all you can do is think about this stuff in the context of your small business and your work as an artswoker - be that behind the scenes or on the stage. This is the kind of stuff that can just ruin your day. It could also possibly ruin your year and it could also possibly put your company under.

So how are you going to be prepared for this? What kind of grace are you going to be able to develop and practice so that you aren't the screaming, flaming, asshole, idiot in the middle of a disaster. And instead, you are the adult in the room that comes up with a brilliant solution and salvages the moment. These circumstances arise. The solutions are never perfect, but there are solutions. So that's what I intend for Anna and Jimena and I to talk about today to share with you.

A summary of some of the things that have gone wrong for us in 30 years that we have survived and lived through: there's the economy. We do function at the mercy of the economy. There are humans involved: artists and or their managers that, as I've referenced, can make mistakes. There is the venue and the presenters who might want to cancel a show because they haven't sold enough tickets. And then there's health. Force majeure happens. Achilles tendons do snap, people get horribly sick. People die. COVID happened.

We're going to start there with those four and let's start with the economy, Anna. Jimena was not working with us at the time, back in the recession of 2008 - couldn't have seen that coming.

ANNA: Certainly, I could have not seen that coming. First of all, let me start by saying that neither myself or Jimena deleted the entire database, as, as Laura referenced. That was an intern. That was before our time and I was not involved. Just to clear my records here. So, um, yes, the economy. Six months after I started or maybe less months after I started working for Laura and I just moved to the US, the economy crashed. So my entire first five years of experience working in the field and for a small business was all related to basically savaging and finding

solutions. The economy had crashed and all of the avalanche of consequences that that entailed for the field and for small businesses. So yeah, what do you do when there's no money or they close your credit cards and you can't charge anything on them anymore and there's no cashflow?

My first answer in all cases of when things go wrong is: you have to be a creative person and like creativity is what's going to save your ass. Excuse my French, but there is enough creativity in this room and outside of this room. And I think that's really the thing that kept us alive. Like you become creative and you say, okay, who could I ask for money? It just really all comes down to becoming creative.

LAURA: And in that case, the big switch for us in that moment was that we couldn't ask the banks for money. We couldn't get a loan from any of the institutions. We got loans from people we knew - some of them were dear friends Some of them were just new acquaintances that loved what we did.

ANNA: Yeah.

LAURA: That was the big switch for us, that was our clever solution for the moment. Yeah, the thing about the recession, which is a little complicated. Yes, it hit in 2008, our 2008, 2009 bookings were fine. Were fine, they were fine. So the great news was we actually had income. Where it really hit us was the 09/10 season, the subsequent season. The solution was the loans from friends got us through a subsequently very bad year, as the recession had its impact.

ANNA: One other way we got particularly creative, I believe it was in 2010. And we were still dealing with the backlash of the economy. It was the first time that we went outside our presenters network and we started targeting event planners with some of our outdoor acts. Such as SWAY, which is still on our roster. It was at that time that we decided that we needed a different kind of income. So you just start a completely new database of new people you've never worked with, but that literally I think kept us alive for a couple of years because of extraordinary income that we would have never seen, otherwise.

LAURA: There was a completely different resource of income for us that we pursued.

Other examples of things we didn't expect include, a roster's biggest earner, canceling on a representation agreement in the middle of a term and completely not abiding by the spirit of the contract, period. This was a European based company, and we had to make an internal decision. There was no fight to be had. You know, people were like, you've got to fight that! It's like, what are we gonna

fight? And our lawyer, Brian Goldstein, counseled us and said, there's no fight here. I mean, yes, yes, you could take them to court, but where, how, the nuance of the contract and the reality of you actually getting paid for things is nil

ANNA: Yeah.

LAURA: And we had to make that internal decision to cut our losses and to just suck it up and move on.

ANNA: Yeah, I mean, I think you know again, there are two ways you can respond to something that goes really wrong in life in general and one is reaction and the other one is let go. I mean, that's really what, you know, you either react and just take action on a different level. And the other way is just walk away.

LAURA: And in that case, we made peace with ourselves as painful as it was and as angry and infuriated we were, you know, that our colleagues were not playing nice. We just walked away and refocused our attention on the artists we had on the roster.

JIMENA: I just want to add that we always also have the opportunity to stop, take a deep breath, as we actually do here in this office, before we start even taking action or letting go. So, it's about, like, reacting right away or stopping, looking at what's in front of us and deciding what's the best way to keep moving forward.

LAURA: Yeah, sometimes you do have to make a phone call right that second, but other times maybe you've got five minutes to collect yourself, get your team together, do the proverbial hold hands and take a deep breath together before you dig into finding solutions to whatever is in front of you.

JIMENA: I think it's a really good skill that we all should build for ourselves when things are not going as we expect it.

ANNA: Maybe sometimes there's really nothing to do. You know, in most events of what we call contractually force majeure, that is the moment where there's nothing to do. Nobody can actually do anything. The definition of force majeure is that it's out of the control of both parties. Everybody loses, you stand back watch your loss, and pick up the pieces.

JIMENA: I remember the time when I was answering the phone and we got a phone call from one of our festivals. It was the first time we were working with them. And at that time, You Laura, you were not available to get that phone call. Anna was not available. So it was on me to either react, or not, or panic, or not. This festival was

calling to cancel, not just one company's tour, but two engagements. So, I had no clue about what to do or what to say. And at that moment, I was so relieved to not say anything, just saying, okay, I'm taking the message. I think this is something you need to talk to Laura, and we're going to get back to you. Because by panicking, I could have created a bigger mess.

ANNA: And that was the best thing that you could ever do. Because then we sat down and we were like, Well, they're completely wrong. We need to fight this back or, you know, or help salvage the engagement, which is exactly what we did in both cases. So the engagement actually went through, -

LAURA: Some examples of force majeure include things like industrial air conditioning units crashing through ceilings of theaters where you're performing tomorrow or that night. Volcanoes blowing up and stopping all air flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Containers that have your outdoor spectacle set getting completely stuck in customs.

All of these have happened to us. They were all force majeure, and you can read all about them in the Creating New Futures document that is linked in the glossary, but it's also on our website on the "About" tab. You'll find a tab that says Equitable Contracting, and under that tab is a link to Creating New Futures. I participated in the creation of this document with an entire section on contracting and negotiating that also includes force majeure because that document came about at the one of the biggest force majeure all of us have experienced, which happened in March of 2020, which was of course COVID and the global pandemic and the universal shutdown of our industry.

And yes, there were people who had fights about whether or not that was a force majeure, which was, you know, I don't even want to, I can't even talk about that. But Anna's point being, in other words, there's nothing you can do, the engagement, the performance is not going to happen. But what subsequently does have to happen is you negotiating with your presenter in, around and out of this force majeure.

So what are the solutions of them? And I point to that document because you'll see how each of those were resolved. And when I say resolved, for example, with the air conditioning dropping through the ceiling, that was the Rialto Theater in Atlanta, Georgia by the way. That show never happened. It was never rebooked.

Other incidents, same with the volcano, the dates we lost when the volcano blew, those dates for that dance company traveling from Europe into the States, they were never rebooked.

Now in our post COVID era, everyone's working very hard for the contracts to say in their force majeure clause, both parties will, to the best of their ability, rebook this engagement in the case of a force majeure. And sometimes they'll say within a year, within two years. And in that way, at least you have a modicum, you have a chance in hell that all that work you did, cause I know it took you three years to get that engagement. All that work you did is not for nothing. And even though you got sabotaged by an air conditioner or a volcano or COVID, you might just be able to still have that gig and the income for the artist and for yourself for that engagement.

Sometimes not everybody's in agreement about what force majeure is. And in one case we had, which was the container with the outdoor spectacle set being stuck at customs. That presenter in particular, did not think that was force majeure at all. They said to me quite specifically: *you should be able to get that container out of customs*. I'm sorry, but I do not have the power in that case. This situation was out of our hands.

ANNA: It's such a thin line, you know, it's a very thin line. Presenters can point to: well, the documentation wasn't correct. They can point out to negligence. Well, if you got an RFE (Request For Evidence) back for your visas, it means that you didn't include all of the information that you should have, and you didn't prove them. And so you delayed the process.

LAURA: And herein lies the ambivalence.

We've never been accused of negligence when it comes to our visas. And also we've ever not gotten a visa. And we are very well practiced in getting our visas.

ANNA: And there was also the time, where it was our negligence because we didn't check the work of an intern that mailed a visa petition with non original signatures on it, which prompt for the petition to be sent back in the mail to the And hit Laura's mailbox while Laura was away at conferences. So we couldn't possibly know that in her mailbox was this visa package. We lost track of this package and it was our negligence so that time what do you think when it's your fault you pick up the phone and apologize and beg for help, just eat up your ego and say I screwed up and I need in this case the presenters support and help to mobilize everything that is in their power to be able to get these visas approved in you know in a timely manner.

LAURA: What did we do in that case? ,

ANNA: When we finally realized that it was in your mailbox, we refiled the visas as a flash and we picked up the phone and we called Bill Bragan, who was so gracious and we just told him it was an honest-

LAURA: Honest mistake.

ANNA: Human mistake. We did not oversee what, you know, what she was doing and that the application was ready. She just put the wrong piece of paper in the mail And so he was very gracious and started mobilizing all of our representatives and the visas were awarded and the show went on.

LAURA: So, apologies. Apologies. Let's talk about apologies, because apologies is taking full responsibility for your actions, saying you are really sorry, acknowledging the harm you caused, and then asking: what can you do to find the solution or just provide a solution. Let alone asking, what can you do to make this up to the person that you have caused this harm to.

It is shocking how many of us don't actually know how to apologize and in that case with that visa this was a very important, still is a very important relationship to us with Bill Bragan and we were very human with him. We admitted our mistake and we were able to collect ourselves and with his staff, contacting our elected representatives, which happened to be the same because this was all happening in New York City, we were able to get the federal assist to make sure that that visa did come through in a timely manner. But how important it is to make a phone call and not lie and to own up and to come right out. So don't make some stupid story up to come right out and say we we screwed up dude like we screwed up and circumstances are now we think we can get this done. We need your help and we're so sorry.

JIMENA: Yeah, and that goes internally and somehow externally so if it applies to your own team, whether you're working closely with, a venue, a presenter, even a box office person anyone, and like, and goes back to the who is who, and everyone deserves an apology when we screw up, in both ways. It's human to expect one if it happens on any other part of the chain or the industry. So we are clear about what to expect. So going back to expectations and going back to tracking your work, it's all tied up in the same way of doing your work. So everyone feels respected and taken into account, into consideration. So when things go wrong, everyone can say, this was my mistake, and you know that the world is not going to end.

ANNA: That's a good point about ethics, you know, cause apologizing and taking responsibility and knowing when it is not your fault, even when you're accused of negligence and it's out of your hands. And you just know that you don't have to

apologize, but also you don't have to take the financial responsibility and the hit. It really speaks about your work ethics and holding a firm position when it needs to be held and being flexible and coming down to negotiation when that's necessary. And just humbly apologize when you're in the wrong. Everything is a gray zone, right?

LAURA: Well, everybody has their own opinion. Fault. Fault. There's a big, big word. Whose fault is it? Because when we find ourselves cornered, or in a pickle, or with a disaster on hand many of us jump straight to, whose fault is this? Who can I blame for this? And if you are at fault, especially in relationship with our artists and our presenters, is to be very honest and not to make up some stupid story, that's just full of nonsense, but to, to take responsibility and admit a mistake and say, we fell short there. That didn't happen. That's our fault. I would say that leading with fault is not going to get you anywhere.

ANNA: Oh my God. Absolutely.

LAURA: This recent example, which has been brought up in several of the other episodes. If you've been following along, we had a cancellation within four weeks of an engagement this last fall that was particularly devastating for both the artist and ourselves. And that had everything to do with the fact that this was a very well established relationship with a programmer. We had done eight contracts with them. This came out of nowhere. And there was a whole lot of fault in that one. And it's not helpful to throw gas on a fire. It's just not helpful. So we find ourselves asking ourselves a lot, is that helpful? We're writing an email. Maybe we're being a little too aggressive with the sentence. Maybe we're blaming somebody for something. We don't hit the send key. We reread our email and we ask: *is this helpful in this situation?*

Because when things are on fire, you do not throw more gas at that fire. You figure out a way to mitigate your losses. You find a way to deescalate.

This is the part about being the adult in the room with a steady head. So you're not throwing gas on the flame. So one of the things That we practice here is screaming and, you know, throwing shit at the wall. Like we practice allowing ourselves to be upset and angry. I got really angry with that situation last October. Understandably, I was furious. And in my communications, trying to navigate my way out of that engagement. I did not scream at anybody, I did not slam phones, meaning I did not scream at the presenter or the person that, number two, that he had me speaking to. It wouldn't have done any good, it wouldn't have helped, I wouldn't have deescalated the situation that way. It takes every cell in my body to be able to chill and get to that kind of space, to be able to do that. So I'm not saying don't get

upset. You're going to have your emotions. You're going to be angry. You're going to be sad. You're going to be infuriated. And leading with those emotions is not helpful in these situations when the house is on fire. Like that's not helpful.

JIMENA: But I have to say that it does help when we share them between us, like when we are clearly able to tell each other: *this is not okay*. For us to understand that you were upset and angry. Holding that space to scream. We know that we can start screaming in the office and then get it released. And then we keep going.

ANNA: Use your car, people. Use your car. I scream in my car. That's what I do. Get in your car, pull the windows up, and scream.

LAURA: And for those of us without cars, me on my bike, I will get on my bike and I will scream. I will scream. I'm the crazy lady screaming on my bike. That's me. That's me.

ANNA: The expression, be the adult in your room. Because when we talk about throwing fault around, right, as a tennis ball. Like it's really literally what my kids do as soon as I reprehend them. Yeah. But it wasn't my fault. It was his fault. No, it was her fault. And I'm like, that's not the point. That is not the point. And yes, sometimes, at the end of the negotiation, yes, we look at responsibility. And of course, if you go to court, yes, that's what it's going to be like. Whose fault is going to be, and who's going to take the hit. Yes, there are responsibility to be taken, but when you have to find a solution, definitely don't look at whose fault it is just cause then you're going to look at the problem and if you have to find a solution you have to creatively find a solution.

LAURA: I'm reminded of what Brian Goldstein had to say in the contracts episode, it's just pointless to think that you're going to change somebody else's opinion, *but they should know better*. It's pointless. You're not going to change their opinion. Therefore you have to rearrange your brain and work from a place of acknowledging their opinion and finding a solution, because if you keep getting stuck on their opinion and the need to change them, you're never going to get anywhere.

ANNA: And if you're married, you know better that you're never going to change somebody else's opinion.

LAURA: There you go.

ANNA: I just wanted to go back to what you said at the beginning, Laura, regarding the fact that at the end of the day, when things go wrong, it's going to be a

financial loss. Like it really comes down to money. Inevitably when things go wrong, there's going to be a financial loss.

So to go back to our money episode, I want to suggest that to get ready for these moments when things go wrong or when things do not go exactly as you expected, you got to still have that cushion in your bank account of six months, because if you lose three months of engagements, or if you lose the bigger engagement of your season, or if you lose an artist that is, you know, your biggest earner. Yes. Right. Then, you know, then at least you know that you're not going to be out of business.

LAURA: And that goes back to the money episode and your budget. And your budget and your budget and the contingency line item in your budget. As well as the best practice of having six months of money in the bank to support you and your employees.

I also think about our arts workers who don't get to have a team. I mean, I have a team. How lucky am I? But there are so many of us that work on our own and by ourselves, so we don't get to have that group share. And if you are doing this work on your own I advocate for you to find people to speak to if you are in a corner, if you are having a situation, you have a trusted colleague you can turn to and say to them, *I really need some help here. I don't know how to unravel this one. How do I navigate out of this or into this?*

I remember when I had an employee who was undermining me. And I didn't know that until an email was revealed to me and I had never had that experience before. I went to a colleague because I had nobody to talk to about this because I had one employee and they said to me, *Oh, you have to fire them. There's no doubt about it.* And it was great advice. And they said *this is not going to get salvaged.* Oh, but they're really great. That we make a really good pair, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. They're good at sales. They know my artists, they have really sharp brain. And they're like, no, why? No, you have to fire them. And that is the only time I've ever fired anybody. But I was so grateful to have a colleague who heard me out and also, gave me very specific advice on how to fire somebody. Cause I'd never done that before. And things like files and personal stuff and what time of day to do it and have a security guard with me because at the time we were in a building that had security. Like that never would have occurred to me and that security was going to escort them out of the building. I was really grateful for that very professional, foundation for me to go fire this person.

ANNA: I remember something had happened with the presenter and I remember you calling, one of your manager colleagues and say, This just happened and that

had never happened before and you just picked up the phone and said I gotta run this by someone Just to have us, you know a second opinion.

LAURA: The perspectives are so helpful.

ANNA: Yeah I thought it was really smart because you know people always think that they have to solve.

LAURA: Inevitably, there's someone in the field who's been through this before. And if you are, if you find yourself in a place where you don't have the skill set or the tools, you just do not know how to answer a situation. Hopefully you have found colleagues and peers or someone who has 15, 20, 25 years in the field who you can pick up the phone, to ask for some advice.

JIMENA: So there are times when things are going wrong, but you got to make the decision of saying or not saying something or when to say something. So there was a time when my alarm didn't go off the day of the showcases. By the time I woke up, I had probably 15 minutes to get out of the house, be "showcase ready." And also that meant taking a car instead of the train to get to the showcases.

LAURA: Right, because your apartment is a good hour by subway.

JIMENA: Little bit more.

LAURA: Yeah, like an hour on a, on a good, on a good day. It's about an hour and 15 minutes from our showcase location. Like it's a schlep. It's not around the corner. It's not even in the same borough.

JIMENA: So that morning I just put myself into action, got ready and got a car, got there, and I didn't tell anybody.

LAURA: That would be me. That's right.

JIMENA: Anna knew later but it was not like right away and when I arrived and we got things going and the showcase happened. I think it was like after we were done with the showcases that I brought it up to you, it was like, you're going to laugh about what happened this morning.

LAURA: But the point being you made a choice because you knew it was going to be tight, but you knew you were still going to get the job done that you needed to get done that morning and it and you,

JIMENA: There was no reason for, there was no reason to bother me too,

LAURA: Me or Anna about start.

JIMENA: Yep. Freaking you out. Or adding more stress to the stuff that we were experiencing.

LAURA: Right.

ANNA: Which brings me to when thing goes wrong and you know you can fix it, there's no reason to bring up the problem unnecessarily and offer more information that can cause a much bigger harm. And I know we're going to speak about this in another episode, which is like you're having filters in conversation and don't offer information that it's not needed to, to solve the problem and make the engagement happen. But this is a perfect example of when you have the solution on hand and you don't need to involve anybody else. Just go do your thing.

LAURA: Get it done.

ANNA: And get it done.

LAURA: So let's talk about health. Because people get sick. Shit happens.

Accidents happen. People break femurs. Achilles tendons pop. Kneecaps fly off. It's all happened. It's all happened. And this is where we get back to contracts, contracts, contracts, because what does it say in your contract about substitutions, quite specifically. In ours, in the contract that we issue to our presenting venues, those engagements, our clause states that the casting is completely and wholly under the artist's control and domain. And since COVID, we have been receiving a lot of clauses from venues that state that the company will guarantee understudies. 90 percent of our companies cannot do that. They just, they don't, they're small operations. They don't have understudies at call and, and will. That's not how their businesses, their small businesses are constructed. So we can't sign off on those clauses that's promised substitutes.

Now the exceptions are the longer running engagements of two or three weeks. Those engagements are anomalies. Those are much bigger engagements that typically come with a bigger fee, and then the company can plan and recognize, *Okay, we're there for three weeks. We are going to work it into the budget to have an understudy available. We'll have the money set aside for the airfare to fly them in. They will be ready to go. We will have rehearsed them.* That's an anomaly. The typical touring gig, which is for a single performance, you know, the company is

basically taking four days out of their lives to travel, load in, tech, run, perform, and then leave. That typical engagement, that budget, that paid fee, does not have the necessary amount of extra money in it to have an understudy on call. It just doesn't. In our case if an artist can't perform, often that means the show is not going to happen. Because yes, one artist, in the majority of the work we are touring, pulling one person out of the show makes the show impossible to have.

That's tough. And it's frankly a miracle that we don't lose more show dates over illness. And that has everything to do with the performing artist who has a tendency to perform under all conditions because we know the show must go on, ladies and gentlemen, we get it. And we're all performers here on this call. And we know we've all performed deathly ill. We've done it.

ANNA: I also want to point out to the opposite situation, Laura, because we have represented companies that are based and around a particular performer. And those are the cases where, a substitute will not even be a possibility for the venue, for the company itself, most of the time, but specifically for the venues, they won't accept it.

LAURA: And for the listeners out there, that's your "named personnel." That's a double N E L, people, Named Personnel. Because when you name a personnel, you have to deliver that person. When you're named, when you're a star, let's just refer to them as the star, because presumably their name is leading the titling. You have promised this named personnel, this star. When they're out, they're out. Show's not going to happen.

ANNA: So, do we consider all of those cases force majeure?

LAURA: Yes. Deathly ill is force majeure.

ANNA: And that means that most of the time, at least in our case, what we do is say to the presenter: this company member is injured. She's going to be fine in six months. Can we rebook?

LAURA: Exactly. So under the best circumstances in a star vehicle named personnel situation, if somebody is so sick or injured that they absolutely cannot perform, maybe you get to actually reschedule the show in the same exact season. And you will see this go on a website, crack open a performing arts center website. You will see "canceled due to illness." Cancel, you know, you will see that rescheduling. You will see that.

You learn a lot about people when you're in tough situations, when you get into a tight spot. It's kind of like divorce, you know, you find out who your friends are, right? you're going to find out when you get into these tough situations, who your friends are, and it may turn out that that artist or that presenter you're working with has no grace, has no patience, can't get beyond fault, can't get beyond blame. And those are big moments. And this is the part where that decision making process comes so much into play. Okay, let's pretend you had a very bad circumstance with an artist and it was miserable helping your artist get through this bad moment. It's gonna happen again. You stay in this business more than five minutes. Some of these, one of these, all of these circumstances are going to happen to you. It's part of being in the business. So if your choice is to stick by that artist in spite of what was brutal behavior, you made your bed and now you're in it.

Maybe the choice for you then, the lesson you learned is, I don't want to put myself or my staff through this ever again, because we've had experiences where it hasn't been me. It's been you guys who have been put through the hell and it's been you guys who have come to me and said that was awful and we have as a group stopped and examined and made a decision, a course correction, if you will. Okay, that's a game changer. We are not continuing in representation with that artist, or we're not going to try so hard to work with that venue again. If they come to us, we'll think about it, but we're not going to be so attentive to them. We're going to focus on other presenters cause that was a really bad experience for our touring company. Why would we want another touring company to go back to that venue? We have deleted two programmers from our database in 30 years because we had so many bad experiences with that programmer. We asked ourselves, why would we ever send another artist to them? And we've made that decision internally. But you don't necessarily know these things about people until you are stuck in a corner with them.

ANNA: Yeah. People or institutions. Cause you know sometimes again, you know, people have no power over the decision of the institution. So some institutions during COVID they canceled the engagement and they actually wanted the money back.

LAURA: That's right. Cause the contract said so, damn it, Anna.

ANNA: The contract said so, or the institution just said, you know, we're not presenting this, you haven't purchased your airfares because it's three months out, you're giving the money back. But it was the institution that forced the hand of the presenter.

LAURA: Yeah.

ANNA: So it's, sometimes it's also out of people's hands, but you take notes. I'm not going to work with this institution anymore because they don't want to pay deposits.

LAURA: People behave badly and there's a big difference between grinning and bearing it and forgiving and also acknowledging that's a behavior that I do not want to participate in or subject my staff to anymore. And then you make a big adult decision to move on as opposed to being the doormat. And suffering through something, you know, there's no glory in grinning and bearing it people. That's a choice that you make if you want to bear that fine. That's I think one of the biggest lessons I have learned because that also falls under that category of being able to say no. Being able to acknowledge this is rotten and we're moving on because I don't want this stink in my vibe. I don't want to subject my artists or my staff to this.

So things are going to go wrong, folks. They just are. And that is the cost of being in this business. And I hope that this episode, can shed some light on some really basic things that can go wrong, but also some nuanced things that could happen to you. And so that you go into your work with your eyes wide open and you can make smart, intelligent choices and have the money in your bank account to make sure that you can get through a force majeure or something that isn't a force majeure. And that you can have perseverance and continuity in the field and survive and persevere. Because it is possible .

ANNA: with creativity

LAURA: With creativity. Thank you, Anna and Jimena.

ANNA & JIMENA: Thank you, Laura

LAURA: And dear listener, you know what? I'm gonna say. Oh my god. Go see a show that hasn't been canceled. Thanks to force majeure go see a show and be grateful that it's happening. I'm always the person that's saying it's a small miracle that that shows on stage. And if it's an internationally based artist, Oh, please. It took three years and a small army of people made that show happen. So, you probably have a very different lens on the reality of shows actually happening now after listening to this episode. So go see a live show and write to us.

Let us know what you saw and let us know what your experience was like. You know where to find me. Until next time.

(Fade out with jazz music by Manual Cinema)