

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 30

LAURA COLBY: Hello, I am Laura Colby, the founder and president of Elsie Management, and delighted to be with you here today for the recording of our final episode of *The Middle Woman*.

And with me are Anna Amadei and Jimena Alviar and the title of this episode is staying relevant. How does one stay relevant in this field with a changing world of politics, of weather, generational change, cultural influence change, social issue change, all of it. How do we in our roles as arts workers stay relevant?

We're going to share with you some of the things we've learned along the way and some of our practice.

We are going to be looking at this very much from a generational framework. You have heard me say that we cross three generations at Elsie. I'm in my 60s, Anna and Jimena are in their 40s, our youngest interns are typically straight out of college in their 20s. So it's really extraordinary to have that generational presence in the room as we make decisions and we move Elsie Management forward through all the changes in the world, in the field, as well as the next generation of arts workers.

ANNA AMADEI: Hi, this is Anna. The funny thing is, that when I started to work for Laura, I was in my twenties and Laura was in her forties. I think we both saw the huge transformation of yes, politics, yes, the world pre post pandemic. I think the biggest shift that completely, carrying us all away. It's technology and, the huge, and wide use of social media and how we all ended up with a computer in our hands, 24/7.

LAURA: In our pockets.

ANNA: In our pockets, right? That we go to sleep with, literally. And that gives us access that it's like a huge window on the world that we really did not have 20 years ago.

LAURA: Yes, Jimena.

JIMENA ALVIAR: Hi! I gotta say that when I started with Elsie, everything was already, up in the cloud. That was back in 2016 and that created a whole big difference. And I'm going to say that it helped us and prepared us for what was to come years later as a pandemic, we were ready, based on the vision of the Elsie team at the time when you guys merged into that world.

LAURA: Yeah, I know I spoke about this in one of the episodes about technology and the cloud and how we were all terrified of the cloud because it wasn't a box in our room that we could touch. It was something that we couldn't see or even imagine, frankly. And there was a major concern about security. Well, knock on wood, we haven't had any issues of security with the cloud, and the defining moment, way before COVID, was 2012, when Hurricane Sandy, blew through town, and our hard drive, was still an actual hard drive, in our office.

The cloud had started happening, but we were not as yet participating, we had not moved the whole thing up to the cloud. Had we done that, we would have been able to work through the two weeks that we were closed. It was October, so it was an incredibly busy time of the season for us and we were deep into programming, that was crushing, that was really hard on us.

ANNA: Yeah, that was really hard. I think that was the defining moment where we decided to give it a go.

LAURA: And then Katie, our contracts manager moved to the West coast and she expressed to me, she wanted to keep her job.

ANNA: No, but before that it was when I went on tour for six weeks.

LAURA: Ah, there we go.

ANNA: Yes. And that was the first try of the cloud and it was amazing. I could work from Europe, and that, happened that Katie moved to the West coast. And then we hired Jimena who ended up working from Colombia for four years. I mean that really opened a world of possibility of you being on the road and being able to answer phone calls.

LAURA: That's right and be able to access everything on our so-called drives and keep all those plates up in the air and be able to still have conversations and no longer have to say you're going to have to wait till I get home to Brooklyn.

JIMENA: I want to add that even though we were already with our files, saved in the cloud I was able to look at many many papers and videos on different formats. So it was not just it happened overnight I think it was a transition as far as I have learned from the two of you and even for us, like how are we saving all the documents? I have to print contracts to be able to read them so my eyes don't get absolutely tired, but it's like finding the tools to keep doing what you do in the best way possible every single day.

LAURA: And your point that it didn't happen overnight is really key. And what drove us, was necessity. Anna had booked a six week tour in Europe. We wanted to be able to make that happen for her to be on the road and do the thing. And that was amazing. We were able to take this tool. The small business did not shut down because she happened to be in Europe for six weeks. We weren't the first in line, but we were the second in line, damn it. And we got it together and we have made very good use of the cloud and all these other tools as well.

ANNA: What we're taking from this is that in like technology can really help enhance, I think, a small business, a small shop like ours, like really enhancing it. And of course, if we go on to, the social media, it challenges us, right? It's a tool that we use and makes, like, our life easier, and then at the same time, it pushes your reach and it creates more work.

LAURA: More work.

ANNA: Right?

JIMENA: The way you think.

LAURA: Oh yeah. Well, I remember being at a booking conference and one of the workshops I was taking was about this thing called Facebook and one of the presenters was like, yeah, no, I want nothing to do with that. I'm not creating a Facebook page to hell with that. And now here we are. If you don't have a Facebook page, you don't exist. And I remember the first time I heard an artist, quote, how many likes they have, you know, and how many- all that stuff like that, that change is huge. And that was 10 years, people. That's a blink basically in the big picture.

And here we are right now with AI having stepped into the room. And we're not quite sure where we're going to go with this. This is a tool that we have sort of started using cautiously. We use it for very specific things to ask very specific questions. Like right now, like how many seats are in that hall in Tucson, Arizona? You know, but that's kind of a stupid example, but.

ANNA: Well, actually it's not, I think it's a very good example because then I get back in the days when, you know, five minutes ago when AI didn't exist, you had to spend 20 minutes to go do that search. Now it takes three seconds, right? So I think it's a great example actually of how we can use AI. Now, we're still don't use AI to write our blurbs because Laura writes every single one of them.

LAURA: For better or worse.

ANNA: For better or worse, but it's because of, you know-

LAURA: I have to say that's a very personal choice on my part because I have a very specific way of how I talk about these forms. And my imprint, your imprint, Jimena's imprint is very important to me because we're humans because we are not robots selling books off a shelf. We are in the business of distributing these incredible creations that are complex and they require a human touch and a human handling.

ANNA: And experience, you know, AI hasn't experienced any of our shows.

LAURA: That's right.

JIMENA: Exactly. And we keep asking ourselves, how can we do better? we keep asking questions to each other of, is this the way we want to present or show or promote one of our companies? Is this a company that we want to promote here or there? Do we have a market? So part of staying relevant, I really think is about keep asking ourselves the relevant questions of the time and the moment that we're in. Five years ago, that was something else. In five years, we're going to be asking different questions.

We've been asking ourselves in terms of social media, what platforms do we want to use and how are we using them. Are they relevant to us or not as managers?

ANNA: We've been discussing about a TikTok account for about 20 months, people. We still haven't made a decision.

JIMENA: Internally, we joke about the videos that we could make for the TikTok account, but, we know that it takes a lot more work and we don't have in our capacity. That's something that we want to start really working on and putting our whole energy or thinking process into because we want to keep doing the work we do in the best possible way.

ANNA: We always think, Oh, technology, like it makes life so much easier, right? And so much faster. I don't know about you all out there, but I, every day I sit at my desk and I think, Oh my God, this got so complicated because everything requires a thousand steps because of security, because of, details and because the whole world has access to the whole world. I mean, like if we think about it, it's really so intersectional and it's a lot of information.

So what we used to do was put in an envelope, a VHS or a DVD with a sheet of information. We would xerox papers and we would burn a DVD and that would be the work. And then we would put the thing in the mail. You think that it takes us less time right now to have all of the information accessible from like online, which is, excuse my French, big BS, because it is a humongous amount of time and a brand new position in the office of another employee, literally just taking care of posting stuff on social media, creating all of the marketing visuals.

LAURA: And let's talk about our website. We had to, we had to build a website that could host all this stuff. And then there are the online accounts that host all of our videos. So yes, we have the biggest account available on Vimeo because we have hundreds of hours of full length recordings. We're not just using two minute trailers. We're storing all those one and two hour videos. So yes, you have to invest in those things so that there's no question that your digital press kit can be hosted on that and on your website.

We don't put tech riders publicly because we feel strongly that that is intellectual property and everybody should not have access to your tech rider. We do not make full length recordings available to everybody for the same exact reason. But when we hired our web designer to put our website together, we made it clear. We want to be able to do updates easily. Without having to pay somebody \$2,000 an hour and we can do our websites updates ourselves.

JIMENA: And even more than that, more about paying someone \$2,000 to make the update is that we move at a very fast pace. So, needing to take that extra step of contacting someone else and sourcing this outside. No, it's taking forever. And that was something that we could not afford.

LAURA: It was incredibly impractical. It became impractical and when the technology advanced and our website was able to hold more stuff, awesome, but we needed to be able to do that ourselves without again, sourcing it out paying somebody else.

JIMENA: Well, that is a skill also. Learning to what you want to learn and know and what is maybe better than someone else does.

LAURA: That's right. But also the point is we can't represent you If you don't have your digital materials on hand, we're ready to go so that we can, in the onboarding of you, if you will, as part of our roster, boom, boom, boom, it all ends up on our Vimeo list, on our website, no questions asked, yes, we can send you that document. So, that is us keeping up with technology, staying relevant.

And this is the other thing we learned when it comes to our website. Remember when they got all fancy and they made those tiny little windows with tiny little up and down buttons and, and everybody made a switch and we were like, yeah, no, we're not going to do that. Because frankly, we hate those little windows and we hate those little arrows. And if it ain't broke, we're Why? Fix it. And our presenters to this day, our website has essentially been the same for 15, 20 years. They thank us for the structure of our website because it's simple, most importantly because they can cut and paste text off of it. And that's why that language is there. Because I know you've all been onto websites and you can't cut and paste the text because it's in some crazy ass code that won't let you do that. How is that helpful to your buyer? It is not.

JIMENA: So we keep thinking about our artists, our companies, our roster, but also the presenters and every single end of this ecosystem. Because it's not just about how we do our work, but how we serve the others and how we stay relevant and up to date with technology, with language, how we use the language that we need to use in order to portray our beliefs.

LAURA: I think you're referring to the cultural zeitgeist. What is the cultural zeitgeist of this moment? And how do we Elsie Management through our work, which is our roster, how are we reflecting in that cultural zeitgeist? To us, the female voice has always been imperative and priorit. In the last five years we have focused strictly on inviting people of color onto our roster for a lot of social justice issue reasons, but also from the, the simple reality that the female voice and the people of color have not been represented on our stages. This is critical.

And because a big sector of our programmers are from the major university presenters. You've heard me speak about the "MUPS" before. This is the kind of

work that they are frankly focused on and interested in right now. We just acquired our first Native American artist, Murielle Borges Tarrant. I mean, we are so excited to finally have this moment, which is incredibly important to me as a U.S. born person. And it's an exciting moment at this point for me, especially 30 years in to have the scope and the range of the voices we have in our roster.

We've talked about how you two have brought in voices that I never would have learned of if you hadn't started working for me and the change that Sankofa Danzafró brought to our roster, that eventi Verticali from Italy brought to our roster.

We have to consider our buyers, yes, Jimena. I've mentioned the major university presenters. We are also focused on the festivals for a lot of reasons. We have this huge outdoor spectacle roster. One of our artists, Polyglot Theater, made this incredible little show about bees. And so we thought, hmm, maybe we should be in touch with the Gardens Association because a lot of our gardens are presenting outside work. We don't sit at our desk thinking, you know, trying to sell the gardens. It's like two minutes of our time, we, we thought, okay, we'll do a mailing. We'll get a mailing list. We'll send out an email. We'll do a snail mailing. Targeted campaign. We have to throw out this big net in hopes that we get one or two or three new buyers.

I think as a small business, you two have heard me say this a million times, it is imperative that we have repeat engagements. Every year that we are rock steady, working with the same programmers But it's even more imperative that every year we have new programmers new buyers Who maybe have never worked with us for a lot of reasons. But we always have to be in search of that new programmer new buyer Aaain for in consideration of our roster. And the question we ask is what do you need? And what is it that we might have for you, that will fill a need that you have in your programming?

ANNA: Yeah, it's about following the trend, but not just the trend, obviously it's following, the social changes, the political vibe. It was right before COVID that we had picked up Craig Walsh's work. Like we could have not survived those fall months of 2020 if it wasn't for the touring that we had for this incredible work, that it's only visual and does not require anybody.

LAURA: Yeah. For those of you who listened to the last episode, which was regarding creating during adversity, Craig Walsh was one of the leading examples I gave because his is a video installation. And to Anna's point, we had three confirmed engagements in the fall of 2020 that we were miraculously able to deliver only because Craig agreed to allow somebody local into his intellectual property, into his IP, to execute and deliver his technique. And he was willing to do that

because he needed the income. He was stuck at home in Australia. The borders were closed. He was not allowed to leave. We were able to bring three outdoor engagements to three very different places in the states and those presenters were so grateful. So grateful. And we were, all of us, all around so grateful. But, again, that helped us stay relevant. We'd had an outdoor spectacle, outdoor section of our roster for a long time, but his, this video installation, that was a brand new thing for us.

ANNA: It allowed presenters to present in social distancing outdoors and, bring art, and because of the nature of his work, also staying relevant, celebrating communities.

LAURA: In 2018 when we started this relationship, we had no idea Covid was coming. So what a gift.

JIMENA: And because we are up to date with knowledge or we try to, we were able to understand that an engagement like this needed different kind of contract and documentation so the artist was not just giving out their intellectual property. There was a non disclosure agreement of how their intellectual property was going to be treated and that gave the artist from the other side of the world the security that his work was okay and he was going to be able to keep making it. But his work was supporting communities on the other side of the world. He was making work like creating this bridge. And in a moment when we all needed it.

LAURA: We all needed it badly and you made a great point. How do we know what is the trend? What is the cultural zeitgeist? How do we stay informed? What we do is we listen. Well, who are we listening to? We're listening to everybody. We're listening to our 20 year olds in the room, who are buried in TikTok and we're not looking at that platform. We are listening, you know me, I'm a WNYC junkie. I am stuck on public radio. I get a lot of information there. I also spend some time on Instagram, but not eight hours a day the way the teens do. I'm maybe on it 10 minutes a day. And. I do watch television. Then there's all the other stuff. I travel and I see as much work, performance work as I possibly can.

ANNA: I think the way we stay relevant, one of the many ways we stay relevant is to continue go see shows.

LAURA: It is, it's critical that you two see as much as I can manage to get you to see. We have to know what is going on out there. We have to know what the competition is.

ANNA: But we also want to know what the audience appreciates these days.

LAURA: Right.

ANNA: And what the audience needs.

LAURA: Yes. And we know this is a gigantic broad field from very esoteric, strange, experimental, great, crazy stuff that we all love to super straight up commercial. Let's go see a Broadway show. I mean, it's a big field people. There's a lot of different work you can see and what your own personal taste is and what you want to see on Tuesday may not be at all what you want to see next Friday, that's fine. But the most important thing is that you get out and see as much as you can.

When we have artists who come to us, I'll use the dance artists, for example, and they're like, well, I want to get booked at Jacob's Pillow. And I always say, what, back to them? That's not going to happen. Like nine out of 10 times, I'm going to say that's not going to happen. And I'm going to say, have you had a look at what's being programmed to Jacob's Pillow? How is it that you fit into that extraordinary international programming? And I'm sorry, this is the part where you got to have the chops, honey.

ANNA: Even if you have the chops. Sometimes you just don't fit in a certain particular programming.

LAURA: And that's where it gets back to the personal opinion. And even if it is a group of curators, cause at the Pillow right now, my understanding is it's three people in the position of co curation at the Pillow. It doesn't guarantee you an in. And so what we say back to our companies is it's our job to make sure every curator knows what you have available and then it's up to them whether or not you're going to fit in to their vision. Because ultimately it's their vision and hey, what gets programmed at the Jacobs Pillow Festival in '25 may be completely different by the time the '26 and '27 festivals roll in and then that might be a perfect match for you in terms of timing and this goes back to the part of this is the long game, people. If you're in this for a quick fix, I'm sorry. That's painful.

JIMENA: I think it's important for us to ask ourselves, like, how do we look at the trends and we think about social media, but also what is happening in the world and how all of that matches the image and the work that you have been creating with Elsie and not just the image, but the mission itself. So how do we stay relevant or stay trendy? Or part of a trend, but we're also faithful, may might be the word, to our own values.

LAURA: Yeah. To our aesthetic.

JIMENA: To our aesthetic. So we can really stand by the work that we represent.

LAURA: Well, I know you hear Anna and I looking at videos going yeah, no, no, we know, like, it's like we know immediately as soon as we see it. Sometimes, there is some ambivalence, but typically it's no, that's not for us, no, that's not for us. And we speak in shorthand, we have a very specific understanding. And then sometimes Anna will come to me and say, would you consider this, you know, and I do the same.

I think about our outdoor spectacle roster quite specifically, because we started that way back in 2008 with what was then called Australia's Strange Fruit, which is now Sway. And this was a company that had toured Europe, every venue, two, three, four times over was so well known in Europe. And there were a couple of US and Canadian presenters who had seen it in Europe and really, really, really wanted to bring it to the States. So we just lucked out, we just got them at the perfect time and we were able to do some very good work for them in that, you know, 2008 to '12, '13, '14. But I look at that because at the time. Outdoor spectacle. Not that it's a thing now, but it was a what? What are you doing? What, what is this company doing? It was such an oddity. It was such an anomaly. And now we have still walking gigantic puppets from Close-Act in the Netherlands. We have the Polyglot's BEES like I talked about. We have a eventi Verticali hanging a gigantic sphere from a crane. And we're working with those people that we cultivated starting back in 2008. We're still working with a lot of those same venues.

And we're also working with what we would consider our indoor programmers who want to do something special. And they're like, Hey, I finally have the money. I can do this outside and not charge an audience tickets. But that's a departure for them. So, in terms of staying relevant, we have expanded our outdoor spectacle roster because people kept coming back to us saying, we need more of that. What else have you got? Our outdoor roster expanded specifically because we had people saying more, more of that. We need more of that. What else you got? And that's exciting.

ANNA: Yeah. And I'm sure you've touched it in a few other episodes, you know, the fact, and you know, and of course it blends with this particular theme of staying relevant, the fact of evolving, you started as a dance manager, right? And you still very much are, obviously, and a lot of people still know you as Laura Colby, the dance manager, but over the years you expanded the roster and you opened up to new forms. And how do you do that without ever compromising an aesthetic, right? Like, how do you, or rather, how do you develop an aesthetic that it's still you?

LAURA: Well, that's a, that's a question I'm going to throw back to you guys. If I, if somebody said to you, what is Laura's aesthetic? What does Laura want? You know, what would you say?

ANNA: I actually had this conversation recently. Somebody asked me, would you ever consider? And I'm like, no, I don't think Laura would ever consider your company. I'm sorry. And the, you know, the reason why is, your work has to be important. On a human level, on a social level. Your work has to be tourable. Meaning no, for real, like we can't, you know, we don't dive in in projects that we know are going to sink us and you're going to sink the companies.

if there's something that, you know, even if it looks beautiful, we're going to say no, it's not because presenters don't come to us for that level of difficulty-

LAURA: Difficulty. No, absolutely. And we, I'm sorry, this is the part where 29, 30 years in, we've been there and done that. We, we have, we have taken on projects frankly, we shouldn't have that were really hard on all three of us on the staff, just wrong, in a bad way and took its toll. And we have internally said to ourselves, that happened. We really don't want to do that again. What, what steps can we put into place so we don't repeat that again?

But I love your point your identification of matter that it has to matter. It has to have meaning, there has to be some humanity. For me, you know, you have literally seen me in tears running backstage giving people my card saying, Oh my God, that was extraordinary. I see you don't have representation. I'm very interested. I think there's a place in our market for you.

ANNA: Yeah. And you know, it could just be, you know, again, it doesn't have to, you know, be a work that changes the world, but if it changes somebody evening and you know, again, it makes you laugh till your tears or it makes you, you know, cry because it really touches you. That's the kind of work. And I know that that's very personal, but it's also, it's also not. There is work that really can impact to that level.

LAURA: Sure. I mean, the bees, the bees are not going to reduce me to tears or, but they are. Oh my goodness.

ANNA: Because it matters because of environmental, theme and it touches the life of little kids that have never seen a bee in 3d ginormous as you know, as they make them, it is impactful in somebody's life.

LAURA: Absolutely.

JIMENA: Yeah, it has to be something that inspires you, or us, or the audience, Laura, you look for things that you can see it interacting with an audience. So it has to stand on its own. So we can really talk about it with passion and with being proud of it and, and inspire others to share it with their communities.

LAURA: Yeah.

ANNA: And inspire other to see more. I have to say, we like work that make people come back to the theater. Of course. You know, to see more, like people see a piece of dance that really blows your mind, even if you're not, not come from the dance world at all, but you can actually relate to that movement or you can just, you know, blows your mind because of the beauty. That makes you come back. You're like, you know what? I'm going to go see more dance and maybe I'll hate the next thing I see. But I went back.

I've always heard you saying, what you got that other people don't have. Which doesn't always mean, did you invent a new, you know, a new genre? No, that's not necessarily it. Exactly. Have you invented fire? You know, like, no, that's really not it, but it really is. What is that you do that other people, who are you touching that other people are not touching? What themes are you bringing up? What are you talking about that other people need to hear? So it is that kind of-

JIMENA: and in which way yeah, maybe it's not it's the same topic, but you're taking a completely different approach and that's why it makes it special and unique. Most of us we want to go and have an experience that matters. And if we're investing money, we want that to count into our lives and we want to make a difference in our day. So that is the main goal as well, is like, to have a moment when someone experiences and feels something completely different or as a break, as a life changing moment, these kind of like breakthrough or just pure satisfaction of spending the time.

ANNA: Cause I was saying, you know, like sometimes you feel like that, even when you go see a Broadway show, which is not our genre at all, you know, like it's very, you know, it's a completely different-

LAURA: But we love a Broadway show.

ANNA: We do love a Broadway show. And some, most of the time we just, you know, are sobbing during a Broadway show or laughing. It's really that kind of, reaction.

LAURA: So it's interesting to consider relevancy across 30 years. And what was relevant for me, or what was important and priority to me 30 years ago was contemporary dance. And I had no idea I was going to enter into this world of circus I couldn't ever have imagined. Outdoor spectacle on apparatus I never could have possibly dreamed of. I didn't know multimedia theater was a thing. You know, so now we live in a world of puppets. And everything they can tell us. Oh my God, I mean, it's just extraordinary. So, I often say it's always been about bodies in space for me and puppetry is ultimately shapes in space.

JIMENA: And you probably never thought about recording a podcast a couple years ago.

LAURA: And so here, let's talk about how, again, staying relevant and the seed of why we started this, Jimena. So this speaks directly to relevance, and I will let Jimena really talk about this. So the story goes that Jimena came into the office, it was sometime May or June, I think, of '23 and said, so Laura, you're gonna start recording a podcast and we're gonna launch it on new International Podcast Day in October. And I was like, right. Okay, sure. So these,

JIMENA: One second, but hold on, here's one second, one second. So at this office we talk a lot, we, we share different ideas. So this didn't come from nowhere. We've been discussing different things. We were talking about.

ANNA: Now, Laura was not always part of the conversation.

JIMENA: Good point. But like in my eight years with Elsie, I've been watching and listening to the two of you having many conversations about the field. I came from an artist and production background and even teacher background, choreography, but my main arts administration, like deep down work, I've been learning at Elsie and it's been from the two of you. So it's been always a conversation of like, what's going on? How do we do this? What's happening? what's the knowledge in there and asking the right questions. So by having all these conversations, it was not just like because I walk out with this idea out of nowhere.

Listening to Anna talking about the podcast that she listens to and other people about this. So we were having a conversation probably after lunch or something like that. I started doing some looking at things and yes, we were looking at social media and it's like, okay, what are we going to do for our social media, calendar. And that's, that's when I discovered the podcast day in September 30, I believe it is. And it was like, okay, now that we have been talking about this idea, what about this? And, it took a team to come up with the idea and to think that it was possible and believing and knowing about all the knowledge that you have been getting,

accumulating, learning throughout all these years that I've been witnessing with the two of you working together for so long. I really value the time that you two have worked together because the relationship that the two of you have created a space where I could learn. And having those conversations like this as a podcast, I thought that so many people could benefit from it and the new generations or people like me, like really at the beginning of like, how do we do this?

Providing all of this information could be just like a great platform for others to learn how you being successful in this business. And as having, this is your career and your life purpose, because it's not just your job. We've learned that this is passion and this is life and the way you like living it and that you enjoy it. So being able to witness that And being able to, to get all that knowledge straight from source, these two wonderful women.

ANNA: Laura and I are like an old married couple. We'll, we also give a couple of counseling where Laura is the very cheerful wife and I'm the very grumpy husband. Okay. That's the best thing I've stated. Everybody knows this.

LAURA: I love that. Well, the knowledge sharing was the mission here. And I think there was also a 20 year old that was very instrumental in the room, and that's Madison Doyle, who is the producer of the podcast, who was our intern at the time when this idea was in our zeitgeist at Elsie. And Madison has steered us and done all the editing and produced our 30 episodes of the podcasting and it's been an extraordinary experience for the last year and a half.

JIMENA: She had no idea what was coming when we had her interview. We knew that we needed like a second intern at that time to help with this main project and we started training her in that way, but she didn't even have a clue.

ANNA: We had it all planned, Madison.

JIMENA: We did and she was game.

LAURA: And she's been on the fast and furious learning curve along with us. It's been incredible.

JIMENA: So it takes a team. I would say that is not just one idea that it takes it echo in others. So you can really see, imagine something, create a seed, put it there. And grow it together.

LAURA: Also staying relevant ten years ago podcasts didn't exist the way they are now again in your pocket. Literally in your pocket. You can listen to them anywhere.

And so we are accessing immediate current technology as a use of distribution. We're also using the 30 podcasts as a framework and foundation for, yes, the book that will, that will eventually happen, in alignment with Elsie's 30th year, which formally begins on January 1st, 2025, because Elsie was launched July 1 of 1995. And so we are spending all of 2025 celebrating our 30th with much pride and many, many blessings that I'm so grateful for.

But it's interesting, if 15 years ago, somebody had said, Oh, you're going to have a podcast. All three of us would have been like, what, what, what, what do you mean? What is that? The one technology we are not accessing, which is trendy, is making videos. of podcasts because that's how people are doing it. And I can't tell you how many people have said to me, where are your videos? And it's like, okay, people, look, we managed to get this done. We managed to get the damn podcast recorded.

JIMENA: Taking on the bigger project of doing videos of the podcast was something that as a small Group of people, we knew that we could not handle at that time.

LAURA: No. And we got a job. We have very full time jobs here.

ANNA: The creation of content, you know, the constant creation of content, which is really the request of the social media world right now. Like they just, this request constant for content and content and content. It's life consuming and never ending.

LAURA: Yes, and this gets back to the balance thing. And we, every day, the three of us internally are checking ourselves. Okay, I can't spend 40 minutes doing whatever that is over there. I can give that 10 minutes and I've got to move on because frankly, our priority is distribution of our artists and getting bookings and the support and creation of new work and getting that funded. That's our priority.

So it's like we have a big neon sign rimming the room saying get, get the date, get the money. I know that sounds so heavy handed and salesy. But that's what we're here to do. We are serving as a distribution system for the work that we have curated on our roster and we are looking for those matches and we're looking for the funding to create new work and keep feeding the system with these beautiful performance works and pieces.

JIMENA: In order to stay relevant you gotta keep your mission pretty clear in front of you. We could have taken so many more routes with this podcast and even with the book timelines, creating more and more work, but then our mission would have shifted to something else. So, how do we stay relevant if we keep branching but we drift away of what we really want to do and what our mission is?

LAURA: Yeah, we're doing what we can considering we have full time jobs. And what our full time jobs are, right?

JIMENA: And I think we've been pretty successful because we set a goal that you looked at me like, what? We're doing what? When? And recording within that full time job was a big challenge, and editing, and sticking to a timeline of publishing episodes to-

LAURA: Production schedule, people production schedule.

JIMENA: And convincing ourselves to get this done and to have our voices here and to have guests and the production schedule of editing with the guests and making sure that everyone's voice was portrayed properly and real. It was not easy at the beginning and maybe it was scary, but right now, yes, we are finishing the goal. I think, proud and happy because I do believe that the amount of information that is in these 30 episodes is so valuable that I hope that more and more people listen to it. I have learned a lot and I've been working at Elsie for eight years. And I keep listening to the stories that Laura and Anna share and I keep learning. I'm kind of sad that it's the end, but at the same time, I know that we have more in the works that will help others keep learning and understanding what we do in this field.

LAURA: I'm very excited also especially for our international listeners because we know that the development of the North American market, is at a different place in terms of producers, managers, representation, that there's been a foundation of this work for a good 50, 60, 70 years and that isn't necessarily so in other countries over the oceans.

Every time I travel and I meet my peers and colleagues, I often have a moment where one of them says, so that's what my title is? Because they had, you know, like, yes, you have a name. The work you are doing has a name. I mean, let's just start with "artsworker." And then we can narrow down to all the other stuff. Producer, or manager, whatever, agent, whatever the moniker is that suits you for the work that you want to do in this field.

But in terms of this content, so we have these episodes, we will have a book, people. We intend to have a workbook that will accompany the book. And we have full time jobs. So, this is our crystal ball. We, we love our crystal ball. That crystal ball and dreaming is very important to us. We would not be in this field if we couldn't dream. And we want you to be able to dream in your work as you go forward and find tools and ways to stay relevant as you go forward. I would say the

most important thing is not to hide under a rock and you have to pay attention to what's happening out there.

ANNA: And go see shows. Always. See shows live.

LAURA: Well, thank you, Anna. Thank you, Jimena. It's been 30 episodes. Amazing. Wow.

ANNA: Thank you, Laura, for having us.

JIMENA: Thank you for dealing and putting up with us for this long.

LAURA: Oh my gosh. And thank you listeners. It's been an amazing experience. Thank you for listening. Thank you for sharing. I'm going to say this again. We are not going to have a field, a live performing arts field without you. We are not, we need you. We need you to enter the field. We need you to start working and to stay working and remain relevant, and frankly, to carry this field into the future, whatever that future is going to be. Thank you.

(Fade out with jazz music by Manual Cinema)