

Note: This speech has been amended from the original taped in May 2020, and updated on June 8, 2020.

Thank you, Lieutenant-Governor. Thank you to the Ontario Arts Council, the Province of Ontario, TAPA, and the jury. This honour is all the more meaningful being bestowed by my peers, colleagues, and mentors.

Thank you to my family, my friends, and my partner, for their unwavering support, even when I took an abrupt career change a few years ago. To my mother and my sister especially, from a family of immigrants, 감사합니다.

I wish I could thank all of my colleagues and collaborators by name, who make coming to work every day so much fun. Every writer, director, performer, designer, producer, stage manager, technician, mixer, dresser, front-of-house, technical director, production manager, assistant – I couldn't ask for better company to spend 80 hours a week in the dark with.

Thank you, Thomas Morgan Jones, for teaching me the importance of trust and compassion in collaboration.

Thank you to the sound designers who've come before, my mentors Richard Feren, John Gzowski, Thomas Ryder Payne, Verne Good, Deb Sinha, Andrew Penner, Lyon Smith, Peter McBoyle, Michael Laird, William Fallon – you lead by example, and your commitment to your craft and community is palpable and infectious.

In this unfamiliar stillness we now found ourselves in due to the pandemic, I've had the chance to reflect on the doubt, insecurity, and stress that plagues our work. I ask myself, why do we put such crushing pressure on ourselves? Does it make us better people? Does it make better art? So I now invite you, watching at home, to take a moment, a breath for yourself. To be kind, to allow yourself the same generosity you give everyone else around you.

Everyone I have spoken to recently comments on the strange times we live in. Time itself seems to have been turned upside down and inside out. Global events that have spanned 40 years now occur within the span of four months. Around the world, and right here at home in the Ontario (and Canadian) theatre community, we face another reckoning. Many arts and cultural institutions across Turtle Island have been founded on a legacy of colonialism that has trickle-down effects to this very day. Although diversity can be preached from a mandate or a grant application, true allyship comes from concrete action on the macro level (systemic policy change) and the micro level (interpersonal interactions). Time is how we measure change.

As a sound designer, my domain is time. Music represents patterns of sounds that evolve over time; a song cannot be captured in a single frame. This emerging chorus of solidarity cannot be an empty refrain – it must be a song that is carried forward with increasing strength and number with each new verse. I owe a debt of gratitude to my colleagues who are working

overtime to educate, to motivate, to rally, to support, to grieve, and to give generously and selflessly.

As a sound designer, one of the most critical actions is to listen. This is an unprecedented opportunity to learn. To seek out resources. To have time to reflect, even in the midst of chaos and uncertainty and exceptional challenges. I acknowledge my own failings towards inequity in the past, borne out of ignorance and neglect. I hope that the designers who come after me will have access to an even wider, more diverse pool of mentors who can be role models and collaborators. I look forward to learning from my associates, from youth and Elders alike. I hope that composers in the future will seek out cultural consultation and commission before resorting to appropriative musical clichés. It is not enough to simply create and consume; there is a responsibility to be aware of your surroundings. The arts community is an ecosystem that requires a recycling of nutrients to stay healthy. There must be a give and take between earth, water, and atmosphere for there to be enough oxygen for its citizens to breathe.

As a sound designer, my work literally consists of amplifying voices. This is no small responsibility, no negligible power. I am making a commitment to hand the microphone to voices who have been previously silenced, creators who have been previously sidelined. In rehearsal, I constantly tell the performers, 'the microphone is there to make you sound closer, not bigger'. We who work with sound, we bridge the gap in time and space. We have the ability to make every word uttered and every note sung on stage come through with the same spit-flying-in-the-air clarity as the premium front row to the nosebleed seats in the back. Sound is a unifier and does not care what price was paid for admission. Sound can make audiences lean into the softest moments, and make the floors shake in the most bombastic. I extend an invitation to my colleagues in the sound realm, to ask ourselves whose stories we continue to tell and how. Perhaps 2020 is the year we put the show on pause in order to rewrite the production.

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Written at Tkaronto, where I currently reside and has been the traditional gathering place of the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, Six Nations Confederacy, the Anishnaabeg, and the Mississauga of the Credit First Nation, and is now home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. This region is a part of Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant. I have spent summers as a guest on Treaty 29 land cared for by the Anishnaabeg, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi; on the historic territory of the Neutral Nation, the Mississauga, and the Haudenosaunee; the ancestral home of the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron peoples on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum; and the area partaking in Treaty 57 originally known as Katarokwi which was home to the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat, and Métis. My family arrived on these shores one generation ago but this land has seen human activity for over 10,000 years. I thank past, present, and future caretakers of the land and waterways for their stewardship. I pledge my commitment to sustainable creation using energy, technology, and space so that we may preserve our resources and gathering places for another seven generations.