

Elaine Klimasko — Losing Social Connections in the Orchestra

Sam Sloan — I was going to ask you what it means to play with your colleagues at the NAC Orchestra, because I imagine that's a big part of it, and a big part of what's been lost.

Elaine Klimasko — Well, absolutely, I mean, it's not just, you know, a colleague that sits at a desk next to you—and I'm making light of any, any professional—I'm just saying that, you know, when you have a stand partner and you make music together, I mean, it's a kind of bonding that is unlike any other. You work as a team and you know, you work with your section, with your concert master, with the conductor, and it's just the fit has to be right. You have to compromise, you have to decide, you know, you're going to put your fingers on the top or on the bottom—you have to get along. It's a very close partnership and it's all about teamwork, and I really miss my colleagues terribly, so, it's awful. We talk a little bit, we do some zoom catch ups, but everybody's feeling very sad right now.

So, you know, let's not complain about, you know, situations like at work it's so hard because, you know, I go in for two hours and then you have to leave the building—not two hours, pardon me, an hour and a half, no break. So, we go from 10 to 11:30, and then you have to leave the premises. Well, I live in Manotick, so what am I going to do—drive home and waste, you know, a big tank of gas, just going back and forth, and I'd only be home for an hour. So, I just sit my car. I go for a walk. I mean, it depends on the weather. I tried going to a student's house to teach and realized that was too risky, that didn't work. So, I listened to music in my car and I go for a walk, I try to pick a fun place to get something to take out to eat. But it's hard. And then we go back. And once again, you work—and backstage we're very private. We reached—well, actually I think it's two people to a table. But they're like eight-foot tables, nobody talks because you can't, and you have to get up close to talk but then you're not six feet apart. So, it's just silence, silence is only broken when we put the violins under our chins and start to play, thank God for that. But it's very, very strange. I mean, you can imagine the friendships I have with colleagues in the orchestra from having been there for so long. And there are a few who've been there a long time like myself. And you know, we're a very closely knit orchestra and wonderful friendships are there, and we don't have any of that, none. You just go home back to your little your little spot and you isolate. It's hard. It's hard.