

Transcript of Interview with Peggy Hogan by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Peggy Hogan

Interviewers: Kit Heintzman

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Location (Interviewee): Montreal, Quebec

Location (Interviewers):

Transcriber: Keisha Mohan

Some of the things we discussed included:

The problems with Quebec's healthcare pre-pandemic. Having a very busy schedule pre-pandemic. The perception of Wuhan in white-dominant parts of North America and anti-Asian racism; personal experiences with verbal assault; model minority myth; Canada's history of anti-Asian racism. Having extended family living in Wuhan at the time of the pandemic; mother from Wuhan. Releasing an EP about Wuhan, The Yellow Crane. Arts and humanities playing a role in healing. Mother's vaccination. Father undergoing chemotherapy during the pandemic, and died summer 2020. Splitting time between Victoria, BC with parents during father's illness and Montreal, Quebec; differences in municipal and provincial management of the pandemic; anxieties of living in a big city. Normalization of restrictions. Preconceptions about COVID based on SARS. The impact of limited knowledge about COVID on anxiety. Making artistic content during the pandemic while separated from audiences. Gratitude for the time that the pandemic gave: to be with family during father's illness and after death, taking time to process and heal, forming new relationships with the body. Late capitalism and its influences. Self-respect at the core of health. Predictions of post-pandemic party culture.

Kit Heintzman 00:00

Hi.

Peggy Hogan 00:01

Hello.

Kit Heintzman 00:03

Would you please start by telling me your name, the date, the time and your location?

Peggy Hogan 00:08

Absolutely. I'm Peggy Hogan, the date is Friday, March the fifth 2021. It is currently 4:05pm eastern standard time here in Montreal, Quebec.

Kit Heintzman 00:22

And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

Peggy Hogan 00:32

I do.

Kit Heintzman 00:33

And would you please start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this? What would you want them to know about you and the position you're speaking from?

Peggy Hogan 00:42

Sure. My name is Peggy Hogan. I'm a Chinese Canadian recording artist that goes by Hua Li. And I'm also a music educator and researcher. And I am the current symposium director for POP Montreal International Music Festival.

Kit Heintzman 01:06

I'm curious, what are some what were some of your experiences with health and the larger healthcare infrastructure prior to the pandemic?

Peggy Hogan 01:16

Interesting question. Yeah, I mean, I would say for those people who are listening that know anything about Quebec and Quebec health care system, it is archaic and lacking in many respects. That said, it's still within Canada. So you know, we have access to free health care. And while sometimes it can be difficult to access, it's still there. I certainly have found that there there have been times in my life where being here in Montreal has been a hindrance to getting the quality of health care that I would like. But I've also had some really positive experiences. So it certainly can range but I would say, there's there there has, there's been a history, especially in the last, I'll say 20 years or so in Quebec, where we have a lot of bureaucratic issues. And our healthcare system here in Quebec is woefully understaffed.

Kit Heintzman 02:34

Would you be willing to tell me a bit about what your day to day was like, pre pandemic?

Peggy Hogan 02:40

Yeah. I, I was an incredibly busy person with a lot of things going on pre pandemic. I, I'll say that I'm very blessed to be someone that gets to work in music, full time, and that that's been my reality for the last few years. Just just before the pit of the, the scene that I'll set for the maybe the months leading up to March 2020. I was coming off of a record release. In fall of 2019, I released my debut record as Hua Li. So that was very exciting time. And I was also working as a touring DJ with an artist based in Iqaluit. That goes by Riit. So I was on the road a lot. I was doing a lot of like back and forth, touring my material and then going and touring her material. And it was just a very intense and exciting time. And the beginning of 2020 was full of possibilities. I think it was for many people, I think a lot of people went into the year with a lot of hope and high expectations. So yeah, I landed the job at POP in January of 2020, which I was thrilled about. It's kind of a dream job in terms of where I see myself situated here in Montreal. I had just, I was about to leave on a string of tour dates with an artist known as Backxwash, who is now spectacularly successful. So that was very exciting. We actually those were some of the last shows that I played pre pandemic. And then I was also headed to the Banff Centre, which is a international artist residency in Alberta, Canada. And I was there actually, as the pandemic began, or really started to happen in North America, I should say so certainly I think I arrived on March 1 or March 2. And we were all talking about it. And it was, but it's still felt far. And by the end of our residency, our residency was cut short by a week. And at that point, we all went home and the pandemic was very much a reality of everyone's lives and was to be forevermore.

Kit Heintzman 05:31

What do you remember about sort of first hearing about the pandemic and initial reactions?

Peggy Hogan 05:36

Yeah, I mean, I think I had maybe a relatively unique experience as someone living in North America, because my family's actually from Wuhan. My mom grew up there. And basically, I would say, the majority of my extended family, on my mom's side is still there. So we started hearing about it in December of 2019, which it was a time where we really wasn't being covered much in the Western media at all. But you know, that it was obvious that something very major was happening in the city of Wuhan. So there, yeah, there was a lot of fear around that my grandmother was was living in a hospital at the time. So there was also a lot of questions around is this viable? Should we move her home? But it certainly felt quite isolated? Like it really did feel quite far away. And even though it had started to impact my family already, certainly there was no, no one had this idea that it was going to be this this very global situation. So yeah, I mean, I definitely I felt very worried from a personal standpoint, but I didn't think much of the- I didn't think much of the impact. And worst, I thought it would be something like SARS in the was it 2008? No, 2005. More, more 2005 I was still in high school. So yeah. I mean, I went to high school with boarding students and my school got shut down, but no one else did in Victoria, you know, so it was kind of this. I felt like it would be more isolated.

Kit Heintzman 07:40

Would you be willing to say a bit about what the restrictions have been like where you are?

Peggy Hogan 07:44

Yeah, absolutely. So I full disclosure, I'll mention this now because I think it'll come up later on. And I'm, I'm totally comfortable talking about it. But my dad actually passed away last summer, in the midst of all of this, and I grew up in Victoria BC. So that's where my parents were. And so I split a lot of the last 12 months in between Montreal and Victoria. And it's been wildly different, actually, between these two cities in Canada. So yeah, I mean, in Montreal it's it's been very variable from extremely locked down to extremely not. And it feels like there's almost no logic to it, which is I think psychologically difficult for a lot of people. Right now in Montreal, we're on a relatively complete lockdown. We have an 8 PM curfew here. And you know, it's hard. It's it seems so normal now. Like I forget, like, what the baseline is. I'm like, Yeah, what else is different? We can't leave the house after eight. You know, there's no public gatherings. We don't have there's no auditoriums open. No, no venues, no in dining, no in-restaurant dining, things like that. These restrictions now that we're under have actually loosened in comparison to over the holidays when all non essential stores were also shut down. Now, there's a little bit of breathing room for retail. But by and large, everything else is closed. But in other points, things have been drastically open here, it feels like. So it really has been, I think, in response to to peaks, things will really, really close down. And then it feels like the local government here in Quebec is, is quite keen to kind of get the economy opened when, when they can. In contrast, I feel like in Victoria, it's been relatively the same throughout the pandemic, because British Columbia, I believe, this is, as you know, I'm not an expert, I'm just a musician. But, from my understanding, there, in in British Columbia, they were a little bit more equipped, because they had been through SARS, in the noughties. And so there were just some, some better practices in play and things, things happened quite swiftly there. So there's still, you know, strong suggestions of physical distancing, you know, mask wearing as there is everywhere now. And, in the spring, I would say everything was quite closed. And now it tends to be this kind of like, just reduced, reduced people in spaces and physical distancing practices in play. But relative freedom, like I, there's still in, there's still in-restaurant dining in most of British Columbia,

for instance, you should be within a certain social bubble, like your household. But, you know, relatively open, my, my dog is barking. I don't know if you can hear that. But I'm just going to grab her because I think if I'm holding her, she'll be quieter.

Kit Heintzman 11:45

Absolutely, absolutely.

Peggy Hogan 11:49

The historians of the future, this is my famous Shih Tzu, Edna.

Kit Heintzman 11:56

I hope they are all as honored to meet her as I am.

Peggy Hogan 12:00

Me too.

Kit Heintzman 12:02

Would you be willing to say a bit about how the restrictions in Montreal and Victoria shaped your day to day practice, attentive to that you are in Victoria for different reasons than when you are in Montreal?

Peggy Hogan 12:16

Yeah, I mean, this is an interesting question, because I feel like well, to give you some insight, my mother is already on a good day, very conscious of germs and how they're spread. She was she was genetic biologist in China. So she's very aware of the, the microbiome. So she Yeah, she she's very, she's always been very conscious of that. And I think she feels quite vindicated by this time, in many ways. Finally, the world is operating by her standards. But at the time, my father was also very sick, and he was going through chemo. So we were very, we were exceptionally careful. In Victoria, like, we went far and beyond the what the government was asking. And I think, I mean, that would have been the case, regardless of whether or not there was a pandemic, like I think those things would have just come naturally to my mother, but there was a, we were even more conscious so. And in the spring of 2019, I think there was a lot more fear, because we weren't as sure about how these things were transmitted. And you know, that I think that there was there was a higher level of uncertainty, and as a result, higher level of anxiety. So yeah, we were we were exceptionally careful. I almost never left the house in that in those first few months. My mum had designated herself the only shopper, the sole shopper. So we we were in suburbia in Victoria and basically in complete isolation at first.

Peggy Hogan 14:15

So I mean, that impacted my daily routine. Incredibly, I'm traditionally very social, I worked in nightlife before the pandemic, as you know, as both like a touring artist and as a DJ here in Montreal. So yeah, it was a real change and especially leaving Banff Centre which was really you know, you're in a you're in a certain creative bubble and around people all the time to go into that isolated zone was very different. I was very compelled to make a lot of content in that time, like I I At first I was very energized and I wanted to reach out and I was a content Queen for the first couple of months of the pandemic, and then I got tired of that. And now I'm, I haven't been on social media hardly at all, since. So, I got out as much as I could at first. And now I really, I've taken a step back. In contrast, while I would say the restrictions in Montreal have almost always, except for a few wild

and free periods, have generally been stricter than Victoria, because the numbers here have been a lot higher. Despite it being more restricted on a city wide level, I felt a lot more freedom here, because I didn't have to worry about possible exposure for my parents. And, I mean, I generally feel more freedom in my own home than I do in my parents home. I think that would have been true regardless. So yeah, I mean, I felt impacted by it here, I think I felt a lot of anxiety about being in a big city. Like, I, I think I was also quite vigilant when I was here. But I would say the largest impact in terms of my practice here in Montreal is that I didn't have the feedback of my audience. So even if I wasn't doing shows all the time, in Montreal, I had this opportunity to interact musically with my public via DJing. On I mean, I had a monthly but I would often DJ, between those, so it was like kind of monthly, at least I would have this opportunity to even if I wasn't playing my I mean, I never DJ my own music. I could play things and and sort of like sort of show my influences and gauge the reaction, you know, so it really made me feel always kind of connected to a music listening public. And all of a sudden, I really felt like I was having to make decisions without that feedback. And as symposium director of POP Montreal that was also very much like, ooh, like, I'm interested in some of these ideas, but I have no idea if anyone else does or what anyone else is really thinking right now. So we'll just kind of have to see how programming goes. So yeah, I mean, I think that was that was true, also of the people programming on the music side that they felt like, well, we're really having to just kind of throw ideas out there and see how people react.

Kit Heintzman 17:41

Thank you so much for that. That was a really lovely answer.

Peggy Hogan 17:44

Oh, good. I you know, I I'm a talker, as I think a lot of performers are. So I hope there's some some sense amongst all of it.

Kit Heintzman 17:55

There absolutely is. 2020 and 2021, 2020 was a pretty big year 2021, looks like it may also be a big year, what have been some of the sort of biggest issues on your mind over this period of time?

Peggy Hogan 18:11

Hmm. Wow, so so many issues, really. But it's something Well, I'll say this, I, I think I personally am impacted always by whatever the social Zeitgeist is, I'm very in tune with culture I like to be plugged in. And so I think all of the all of the Fascinations that we kind of collectively had over the past year in North America, I felt impacted by. So naturally, The BLM Movement was huge for me, there was a huge resurgence of Me Too in Quebec. And then I mean, it was kind of like the first Me Too in Quebec, which was an interesting moment to kind of see as well. But then we also saw a lot of talk around this outside of Quebec as well, this past year. And then all of the the social issues that the American election brought up, I mean, these things impact everyone in across North America. So all of that stuff had been on my mind.

Peggy Hogan 19:36

On top of that, I was very concerned with I, I was very concerned with the perception of Wuhan. As the pandemic began, which very quickly then translated into the perception of Asians within North America or within, I would say like white dominant North America, let's say. So. Yeah, I mean, it started from a very centralized like, Ooh, I hope the whole world doesn't think of Wuhan as this like strange, you know, like, it's actually this very modern, nice city, we're not just like running around eating bats, or whatever people thought, you know, like, it's this

incredibly rich, very modern metropolis. So. Which is not to say that those things are more inherently inherently more valuable. But you know, it's, it's not what people imagine. Yeah, and then, and then immediately, I even before I had left on tour, I was starting to feel some tension, like I was attacked verbally on the street. And this was not like, you know, we there were no cases in Montreal, even at that time. So, it was very clear to me that the perception, the safety of the model minority myth was suddenly no longer there. And I'll say, as a, as a, as a Chinese Canadian, who is of mixed racial descent. My dad was a, like, Irish-Scottish Canadian. I never, I've never experienced that. I mean, I've experienced being an outsider, but I've never experienced that kind of intense, overt hatred, that is in the history of kind of the making of Asian America. It's a big part of why there are Asian Americans where they are across Canada and the US, like a big part of what made us move around had to do with being racially attacked. So yeah, I mean, that's there. And I know, I know that history intimately, but certainly, the viscerality with which it is expressed now makes it kind of at the forefront of, of my, of my thoughts.

Peggy Hogan 22:19

And I'll say, as a final kind of note on this question. My father was diagnosed with lung cancer in January of last year, and he died just seven months later, in July. So that was, that was a big part of my year. It really colored the way that I saw the pandemic. And it also took me out of the pandemic in a very intense way, you know, that I was dealing with this personal issue, and it took up a lot of my focus. So yeah, I mean, that, that continues to be on my mind, like my grieving process. But I will say, and I've expressed this throughout the past year is that I have immense gratitude for the amount of time and space that this kind of the, the side effect of the pandemic being, you know, we've kind of shut down as a world and especially as a concert industry. So I don't know that I would have had the opportunity to spend so much time at home in a normal year, and I don't think I would have had the opportunity to really process as much as I have. And that's something I have just immense gratitude for like, I'm, I'm such a workaholic, normally, I love chaos, like I love a chaotic schedule. And I don't know, I would have felt so much guilt about taking time off. And I don't know that I would have allowed myself as much time to process like, I think I would have been like, Okay, this is probably enough, I've dealt with it. So I'll go back, like. So yeah, I mean, I think it's been an incredible it's been an incredible opportunity to think about personal growth and emotional growth and processing. This recent tragedy, like personal tragedy, but then also all sorts of other things. And I know that a lot of people in my community are, are doing this kind of personal work right now. So it seems very timely and actually very hopeful. Like I think it's gonna be really nice for all of us to get out of our isolation and meet each other in these more, in these like, like more mature emotional bodies, let's say.

Kit Heintzman 24:47

Can you tell me what health means to you?

Peggy Hogan 24:51

What health means to me? Oh, fascinating. You know, this really ties into what I was just saying because I think my conception of this is very different now, having taken some time off to be inside of my body. So I don't I don't even know what how I would have answered this question even a year ago? Because I was very unhealthy in many ways. Like, in almost every way, I would say. So, yeah, I mean, now, I'm in a space where I have a lot of time to prioritize self care and understand what that means. Which is really, for me, like learning the basics of how to be a functional human being inside of a body. So I, I do things now that I never would have imagined I would do regularly, like I exercise every day. I drink lots of water. I eat nutritious meals regularly. This is just I as I said, I loved chaos. I loved having a schedule that felt unwieldy. And I really liked working off of the energy of like just being on the run, like I loved being at a sprinting pace. But I never thought about the consequences of

that it felt very natural for me to be like, I don't have time to eat right now, so whatever, just forget about it. And then oh, here I am, it's 10pm I am an hour to DJ set, I haven't eaten anything, I better just order something or ask someone to bring me like a poutine from across the street. You know, like it was just, I never really prioritized myself in terms of making decisions prior to this. And I think that that physical manifestation of that was very much reflected in my emotional and spiritual well being as well. So yeah, I mean, I think I think health now to me, means prioritizing the very basic care that a body needs. And that work should never come above that. Which we'll see if I'm able to implement, but hopefully I will. And then, yeah, I mean, that baseline is health to me, like if you're able to kind of like, treat yourself in a way that respects what the body needs. If you have the mental and spiritual resources to prioritize that and do it successfully. That's the pinnacle of health, I would say. Anything that moves beyond that, and is still functional, I think that still is in like maybe the healthy range of the spectrum, you know. But maybe the peak of it is is kind of having enough knowledge and enough time and enough respect for oneself to implement all of those things.

Kit Heintzman 28:20

How do you think what are the kinds of things that you think would need to change in order for that to be sort of widescale attainable?

Peggy Hogan 28:28

Oh, wow. The dismantling of late capitalism, the hetero patriarchy, you know, like really mass societal change, I think it's so natural for us to to overwork ourselves and seek value out of being busy or, or obtaining value even from denying ourselves our needs this idea of like, Oh, I'm so important, because I don't have time to eat a meal. But that's that, I mean, it's absurd, but it's a decision that I think all of us have often made. You know, I know when I was in grad school, it's like, there is like, self denial. It's like a self denial porn. You know, like, there's like a fetish for like, how hard how hard how studious can you seem. And I think that's, you know, that's reflected across, it's certainly not just the academy that's like that, it's it's reflected across every industry. It exists in the art world, immensely, you know, it. It's permeated every, every nook and cranny of our lives. This type of late capitalist perfection, which is ultimately very destructive for every individual person and all of their relationships, and everything that they do. So.

Kit Heintzman 30:04

Would you tell me what you mean by late capitalism?

Peggy Hogan 30:06

Oh, um sure. I mean, this particular iteration of capitalism that we live I see the distinction as late capitalism, the way that I conceptualize it is this phase of capitalism, wherein the corporate world has now much more power over the individual than our democratically elected government systems do. So we live in what is essentially a, like a facade of of democratic representation. That certainly our our politicians have some power. But the influence of corporate entities is so immense amongst how how like state policy is created, that, you know, there, there's no escaping it, essentially, the other component is, is the information is capital. And this idea that we now have these huge corporate interests in the Silicon Valley that know everything about us and control all of our data and just, you know, have so much access to our lives, it's really, it's putting us in a place now where information that was once I think, essentially either private or shared only between you and your democratically elected governmental system. It's created this very strange like, like, you know, third or, like second wing of um policy or like, of influence over the individual. Being that I'm a musicologist, and not a socio economist. This is really, you

know, this is more how I see it. But to me, that's the distinction like when people talk about late capitalism, they're talking about sort of this, like post the legislation where corporations become like, their own weird citizen that is, like, not governed by the laws that we are it just like that, that type of legislation creates a lot of like, very strange effects on society.

Kit Heintzman 32:53

Would you tell me what safety means to you?

Peggy Hogan 32:56

Oh, interesting. Safety. Oh, wow. Okay, what a concept. Okay. So I would say there are some, there are some baselines for safety. That, again, have to do with with being able to meet one's needs, right? So I think that a safe place to live like a home or, or like stable shelter, even, let's say, a consistent like means of being able to feed oneself. Consistent and accessible, clean water. I would say in our society, you need things like electricity and you know, access to to these things that we consider basic, right? That's sort of the baseline. And then beyond that, I would say, safety also involves being seen as a respectable human, by the people around you. So you know that your humanity is valued just as just as anyone else's is. When that question of is your is your inherent worth within a society lesser than someone else arises, it immediately strips away safety because you can't trust anyone around you. So yeah, I would say at its essence, it has to do with being having access to the things you need to survive, and then being able to trust the people that you interact with on a daily basis. You know, we're herd animals still, so we need to be able to trust the herd to feel safe.

Kit Heintzman 34:58

How have you been discussing navigating, negotiating safety ideals with your herd?

Peggy Hogan 35:05

Hmm. Yeah, I mean, I would say with within the herd that I interact with on a regular basis, it's been delightfully easy. Because generally, the people that I'm closest with are quite like minded. You know, I'm, I'm in my early 30s, a lot of my friends are a little bit older than me. So we all have parents of an age where, you know, we're all thinking about their, we've already all been thinking about their health, and certainly, this makes us a lot more conscious of it. So I think, you know, I, I would say, generally, the people I interact with, we're on the same page in terms of how to protect ourselves and those around us when it comes to the virus, like how to deal with that. And, and I've never, I haven't experienced any personal pushback around what I would like, you know, to, in order to feel safe in that respect, I, there's no one that I associate that doesn't like, respect, that kind of request. So in that way, it's been actually quite easy to navigate. When it comes to the, the, the outer circle herd, let's say, I personally have had a couple of verbal attacks over the past year in terms of like racially motivated. I would, I would assume pandemic motivated, racially motivated attacks. So that certainly has made me a little bit more conscious about my place in Montreal. It's not the first time like, these are not the first instances I've experienced overt racism overall, but that it feels, the tension is much more real. And it's it's much more constant now. Whereas in the past, it's always been like, Oh, this is very isolated. Now the threat feels a lot more imminent, especially with over the last few months, this extreme, like sudden increase in physical assaults on our elders, but then also, mostly our elders, and now increasingly, people of all ages. So like a Korean man was stabbed in, in Montreal at the beginning of the pandemic, and these things continue to happen, there's been a lot of property destruction. So that's certainly, you know, when I allude to this idea of being able to trust the herd overall, that that feels very, very much further out of reach than than it had been, for me personally, as someone that's

racialized in my particular way, felt. You know, it's also very illuminating for, I think, a lot of people of Asian racial descent, because, as I said, most people in my generation, especially those of us who are relatively fair skinned, and especially East Asians, I would say, we haven't experienced the negative side of what does it mean when the model minority myth is, you know, no longer in consideration in terms of the way that we're perceived? So it's been very eye opening I think for a lot of folks in in my generation and especially those who maybe are not as well versed in anti racist work or maybe don't for whatever reason don't have access to to knowing like the personal stories of people who enjoy less privilege than we do like black and indigenous folks.

Kit Heintzman 39:28

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Peggy Hogan 39:33

Oh, that really depends on what the immediate future timeline is. Because I feel pretty great about tomorrow, but yeah, I I honestly, overall, I feel kind of hopeful. I do feel like there's a light at the end of the tunnel. Now. Certainly, there's some some anxieties around the variants. But I'm a I'm a generally pretty optimistic person and I Um, I I'm really looking forward to the summer, I think it's going to be kind of like last summer in Montreal, but with much less fear. And we'll be able to socialize with just like a little bit more, things will be a little more natural feeling I think. And I'm my mother's getting vaccinated today. So that's great. You know, that's a very hopeful thing. So yeah, I mean, I, I guess the way I see it is that things, things should be getting better. You know, I don't want to jinx anything. But it's, I you know, I think generally, I am feeling hopeful. I think this has been a great time of reflection for all of society, and that we will come out better on the other side. So I look forward to that. And I look forward to hopefully, having some concerts this fall, who knows, I don't want to overstate how optimistic I am. But it'd be nice to have, like, you know, some like potentially less socially distanced concerts as well, something that feels a little bit like it used to.

Kit Heintzman 41:19

picking up on this narrative of hope. I'm wondering what some of your hopes are for the longer term future coming out of this.

Peggy Hogan 41:25

My, my greatest hope and desire is that a universal basic income will be instated in Canada, and we shall see. I don't know how likely that truly is. But I think it speaks to my optimism that I think about that. Yeah, as I said, I think it's been a wonderful time where people are really doing a lot of individual work on themselves. It's everyone has been through a lot of a variety of challenges. You know, every everyone's pandemic experience is purely unique. And, and uniquely horrifying, I would say. So. I yeah, I do look forward to, to how people's perspectives have changed. I think we've learned really just how interconnected we are as a globe, which is, is actually quite beautiful. And it's very sad that it's taken this incredibly scary and tragic thing to, to show us that. But I think that's, that's actually a concept that's going to help us moving forward. So yeah, I mean, I think that's, that's a large component of my hope i i feel like we will, we will become a more conscious and closer knit society.

Peggy Hogan 43:09

And I also think that we'll just appreciate things more. So I, you know, I, this is, I feel like this is so micro compared to what I was just talking about, but the party scene in Montreal, over the last few years, I feel like has been very boring. And maybe that's just because I'm in my 30s now, and I've been doing it for a long time. But no,

I think it's going to be exciting to be able to enjoy nightlife and enjoy the concert industry, from a new light, like, I really think we're not going to take that for granted anymore. I know personally, as like someone that is an artist and also someone that works on the like personnel side of the industry, I loved going to show standing at the back leaning against the wall and talking through the whole thing. And I'm never going to do that again. So I'm never going to stand on the sidewalk chatting with the people smoking outside of a show, as the show is happening ever again. And and I think you know, it is exciting to think about like how, how revolutionary and wonderful it's gonna feel to be able to be in a party atmosphere again. I miss I miss interacting with the queer community, especially in this way like just having these spaces of of collective safety and seeing one each other for who we are and things like that. So yeah, I mean, that's that's part of the hope, too, is that these things that I've always loved about being an artist will become more more appreciated.

Kit Heintzman 45:04

I'm curious, would you be willing to share some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last year?

Peggy Hogan 45:12

Yeah, absolutely. I think I would say up until August or September, I was not great at taking care of myself. Because it was really focused on my family. But once I, once I got back here to Montreal, and I had sort of that space and a little bit more self determination. Well, we first in September, we did a hybrid virtual social distance version of POP Montreal festival. So that also, I prioritized that over me a lot. That was a large undertaking. But since then, I really had have settled into a intense routine of self care, which has been amazing. And I hope to carry a lot of this forward. I exercise almost every day, within reason. And I'm being more conscious about what I eat. I'm taking time to journal and reflect and just try and listen to my body more I think, in pre pandemic, I didn't know what that really even meant when people talked about it. I was like, listen to your body? I mean, yeah, like, I guess like, if I'm hungry, I'll eat, which was not even true. But I didn't, I didn't know I didn't, I didn't even understand like, what a body could tell you. So yeah, I mean, I think all of these things are incredible. I'm very grateful to be thinking about this stuff more. And I look forward to being a lot more generous and in tune with myself.

Kit Heintzman 47:01

All right, I'm at the penultimate question. It's a bit odd.

Peggy Hogan 47:07

Okay.

Kit Heintzman 47:09

So we know that we're in this moment with a flurry of biomedical research. I'm wondering what kind of research you think people in the humanities and social sciences can be doing to help us understand this moment?

Peggy Hogan 47:20

Oh, I don't think this is odd at all, because I was, I'm a musicologist. So I think the arts and humanities have so much value, even in a medical context. I mean, it can go anywhere. And we're learning so much about how each individual person thinks of themselves within society, right now. And we're learning so much about the interconnectedness of everybody. So it is actually I think, such a rife moment for a lot of fascinating social

research around the impacts of isolation, like across any, any pursuit, any kind of area of expertise. How has that shifted people's ways of looking at what they do how they do it, like, there's just so much to learn there. There's gonna be I just, I can't, I cannot even fathom yet the impact of this on the art world and how it's really going to shift the the subject matter that people choose the the methods that people choose to create their art, self expression is just going to be like a whole new thing now. And we have this huge influence on on the way that we're thinking about creation. So, I mean, I don't know this is quite general. But at the same time, I just think there's so much interesting research that can come out of this, we've gone through a collective trauma. And that in itself is fascinating. I mean, there's just so many, there's so many fascinating things on a social level, when it comes to what happens, what happens with with people and culture. So yeah, absolutely. I think there's so much to be done there. And I think I think the arts and humanities play a large role in healing as well. And I think that's something that can also come out of this is, well, I'll say, in connection to your previous question, something I didn't mention is that I have been writing more than ever, and I have more time than ever for my musical practice. And that is also a big component of how I take care of myself. And you know, just just having a creative practice to go to in this time is so important. I think that could also be a very wonderful offer a wonderful wealth of knowledge to study so I mean, yeah, I think the the possibilities are endless. And my final thing that I'll say on this, because I actually think this question is so fascinating. There is a set of, like data that it's, it's just so it's like, the conditions of society right now are so unique, that any study around the social that is made right now gets to function under, like the most, like uniquely natural, naturally created circumstances that I don't know that like one could ever emulate, artificially. And that in and of itself, I think is very, very fascinating for a researcher.

Kit Heintzman 50:46

Could you say a bit more about what you mean by that?

Peggy Hogan 50:50

Well, just just that we're, I mean, I hate to even say this, but we're in such unprecedented times right now. That I mean, it really depends on like, the kind of study that you might want to conduct. But let's say you're a researcher that studies sudden isolation as a result of a demand or, like, how does how does Distance Learning impact a child or, you know, any anything that is specific to this time that could have been a research question that someone had before the pandemic and was thinking like, how could I ever create these circumstances? You know, like, I think it's a little cruel to like, just take a subset of children and force them, you know, like, it's just that we're like we're being offered. We're being offered a lot of unique circumstances that can model research that very likely could not have taken place if, if one had artificially created those circumstances.

Kit Heintzman 51:57

Thank you for that. This is my last question. And it's sort of grounded in this being an oral history interview, which is that one of the assumptions I come to this interview with, as a historian is imagining a historian, 50 years after me 100 years, 200 years, how foreign this moment is gonna feel to them no matter how connected and how much we grow out of it. I'm wondering two things. One is, what would you want them to understand about, if they wanted to study anything about COVID-19 in this moment, what kind of wider context would you want them to not lose sight of? And the other is, if you could tell them a story that you really hope doesn't get forgotten. Tell them what matters to you as an actor in this moment.

Peggy Hogan 52:48

Wow. There's so much gravity to this question. Huh.

Peggy Hogan 53:03

This is what I'll say. When I think about something like the Spanish flu in comparison to living through COVID-19. Something that I often think about in terms of things we don't know, or that are not maybe more common knowledge about this, or that we haven't been talking about, is like, I don't I don't know much about how people felt during the Spanish flu. Like I don't, I don't really know what the impacts of that socially were. And yet, I'm seeing now in this current moment, that the idea of the way that we are isolated with technology has created such an interesting, like response from the individual in terms of how they're reacting to society, and I'm seeing these like, like overarching trends, which is like a very, you know, it has to do with algorithms. But it there's this interesting kind of connectivity despite being isolated. So, I think that's maybe some of the most fascinating part of the story. Like, yes, the statistics will always be there. And we'll always be able to say like, you know, in these years X X percentage of the world's population died. And, and the impact of that, I think, those types of statistics no one ever forgets, like we always know, like, the the times in the history where a bunch of people died. We talked about that. That's something that like, we feel as very mortal beings in this world, you know, um, But yeah, I mean, I always find like, what is the what how do these things affect each individual and the billion permutations that an event can have? That's that's the stuff that I think people shouldn't lose sight of. But I'll I'll give historians in the future credit where it's due, because I think historians are also very interested in these stories, you know, so I, hopefully things will continue in the field in this manner, and the social will continue to be very important and historiography will continue in this route. So yeah, I mean, to me, that's what's fascinating.

Peggy Hogan 55:46

I'll I'll say, on a very personal level, this is kind of how I think about it. I was born in 1989, which was the same year that the Tiananmen Square massacre took place in Beijing. And, in fact, my parents met in China. And their plan was to have their child there. They were going to move from Wuhan to a city in the north called Fujin because my father was a linguist and he majored in Mandarin and Russian. So he wanted to be in a place where he could interact with both cultures and languages. And this was a beautiful fantasy. This was like the pinnacle of his life work, everything was set up. And then in June of 1989, Tiananmen mass Tiananmen Square massacre took place. And the Canadian Embassy strongly suggested that Canadians evacuate the country. And that is truly the only reason why I was born in Canada, it was it was not, it was very unwillingly on my parents behalf. So that's like one little, like, life altering thing. That to me is like one of the like, billion permutations of how, of the effect of Tiananmen Square. And this is someone I mean, my mother was basically apolitical, she had nothing to do with the students, there was no reason for her as a Chinese national necessarily to leave, you know, so, I mean, like, had she not met a Canadian at that time? It's just like, I think there's so much richness when we're able to think of like, yes, there's this major event. But then when we're able to kind of trace that onto all of the different web of personalized experiences as a result of those events, they make them more tangible in the future. And I think this is actually how we learn from history repeating itself. Otherwise, it's always at this sense of like, okay, well, that happened back then. And that was a very spectacular, fascinating event. But it's very divorced from, you know, my life now in 2075. Whereas, I think if we're able to kind of take it to that personal level, it's easier for 2075 person to say, Ah, yes, okay, I see, like, you know, if something like that were to happen to me, any, any number of things could be the result.

Kit Heintzman 58:27

Thank you so much for everything that you shared today. That is the end of my questions. So at this point, I just want to take the opportunity to invite you to say anything related to COVID 19, 2020, in general, that I haven't given you the space to say

Peggy Hogan 58:44

yes, sure, I will mention my my EP that I I released,

Kit Heintzman 58:49

Right

Peggy Hogan 58:50

I so as I said, I was at Banff Centre, when the pandemic began. And long before any, any talk of a virus had surfaced in the world, I had set out with this idea to write a set of songs about Wuhan. So that's what I had pitched to Banff Centre. And that's the project that they accepted me on. So that was a very fascinating moment for me creatively to kind of go in my original idea was just to kind of introduce Wuhan to a North American audience. Which certainly by March of 2020, I no longer needed to do, it was much more of a I felt like it was like a publicity campaign after like, I was like, Okay, how do I, you know, how do I do damage control on this? So yeah, I mean, that was very, it was like a strangely timely thing for me as an artist. It's really like, the feeling that I had was so conflicting because on one hand, I was so horrified by what was happening, and on the other hand, the the very selfish part inside of me was like, wow, I've totally struck news cycle riches as an artist and maybe this is my chance. It was it was very strange. Uh but creatively speaking, yeah, really, it changed a lot about my, my entry point in terms of how I was talking about the city. And, and how much anti Asian racism came to the forefront of those songs. I think that's a piece of everything that I write. But it certainly it was it felt more urgent to have that at the forefront of some of the messages I was trying to share with those songs. So yeah, I mean, it was it, anyway, all that to say, I released recorded wrote and released four songs in a release called the Yellow Crane EP, in 2020. And I think that that is just so exceptional. And I feel very, very grateful to have the support of my label as an artist in that time. You know, I wasn't supposed to do a release last year, I should have been touring. So, you know, I just, I feel as an artist, just so lucky that I had people really in my corner through this and it feels really significant to have been able to release work that was so timely. So I hope the future historians will, through whatever amazing medium that they have to listen to music, hopefully this will still exist in in some form, though, it was only a digital release. So I don't know. Hopefully they'll be able to hear the songs because I think they're a very loving dedication to the city of Wuhan and encapsulate a perspective that is uniquely mine.

Kit Heintzman 59:16

Thank you so very much.

Peggy Hogan 1:01:55

Of course, these questions were, were uh unwieldy and I very much enjoy that.