

## COVIDIOT [NOUN, INFORMAL]

Someone who continues to go out and socialise despite being told repeatedly to stay at home;

A person who hoards goods (especially toilet paper, masks and sanitisers), denying them from their neighbours;

A person who does not observe social distancing;

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The Coronavirus or to use its hipper name, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone across the globe, regardless of race, age, sex or religion.

With an astute sense of observation, Soprano Christina Thé has been inspired by how people behave in times such as this. "Locked-up" at home for 56 days, she has written these pieces to cheer up her friends and to counter the gloom and doom that is in the news.

We can empathise and relate to her stories, which include themes on friendship and parenting, as it is how we all behave, or we know someone just like that, even if we refuse to publicly admit to such irrational actions.

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"A timely, light-hearted record of crazy behaviour against the backdrop of a pandemic that has rocked the world in our lifetime... This book is a timely page turner and makes a great gift that can be dipped into over again. Read it and share it!"

—Eleanor O'Connor  
Penguin Random House Publishing, UK

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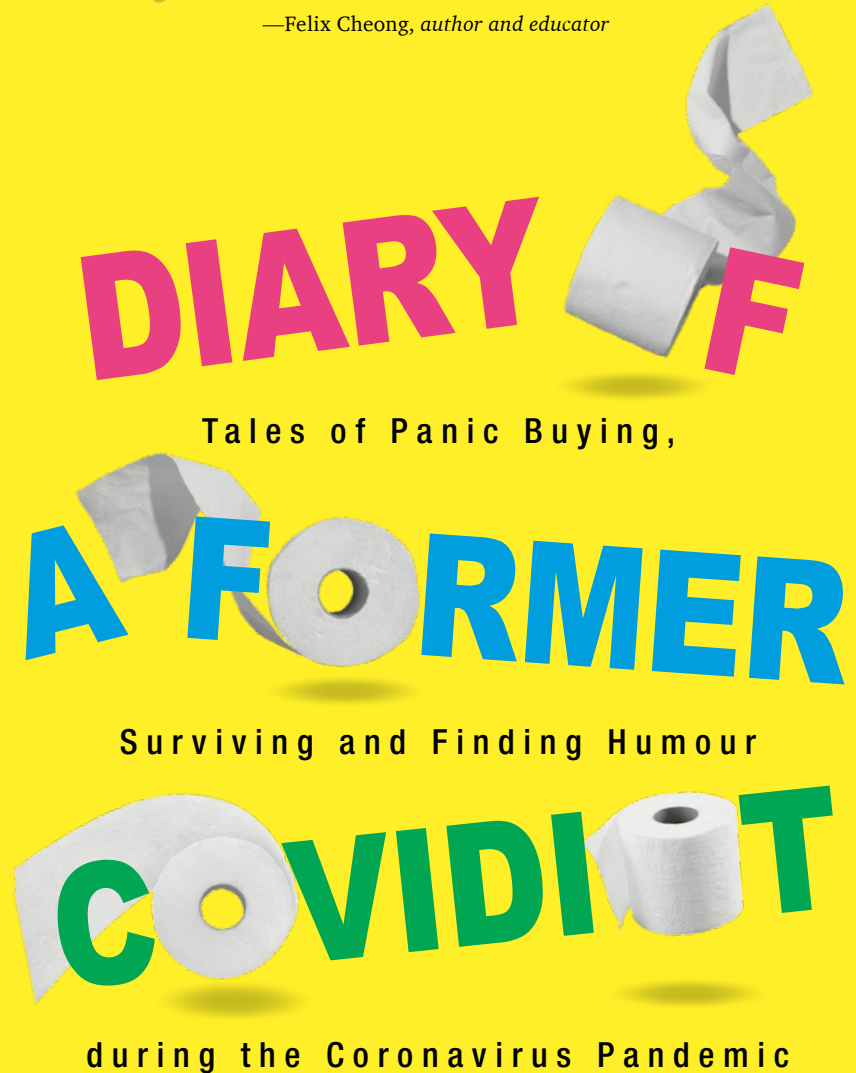


Christina Thé  
  
**DIARY OF A FORMER COVIDIOT**

Marshall Cavendish  
Editions  


"This collection of vignettes about life under virtual lockdown is not only refreshing for its self-deprecating humour, but also a wry observation of human nature under duress."

—Felix Cheong, *author and educator*



Christina Thé

# For Review Only

## Global praise for *Diary of a Former Covidiot*

“Witty, clever and addictive, I recognised myself and others in the hilarious stories Christina Thé brings us in *Diary of a Former Covidiot!* A timely, light-hearted record of crazy behaviour against the backdrop of a pandemic that has rocked the world in our lifetime.

Christina Thé brings the reader stories from her own world in Singapore, introducing hilarious characters doing crazy things. We will recognise Covidiot behaviour in ourselves and those around us whilst trying to ‘survive the pandemic’, making us nod along and laugh out loud.

Whilst acknowledging the grief that COVID-19 has caused many, Christina seeks to offer some light relief from the situation, recording this new, strange way of life.

This book is a timely page turner and makes a great gift that can be dipped into over again. Read it and share it — will bring a much needed laugh to many!”

—**Eleanor O’Connor**  
Penguin Random House Publishing, UK

“Funny as hell. It’s comedy gold. Thoroughly entertaining from first to last page. Christina Thé wittily takes the reader on the roller coaster ride that is the pandemic, from a satirical and comically honest perspective. Pages are filled with light-hearted humour and satisfying laugh-out-loud moments. I really enjoyed this book!”

—**Clarissa Santoso**  
PhD Student, USA

“FF’rickin hilarious and screenplay-worthy! You ROCK, The Christina Thé!”

—**Ben Chan**  
Executive Producer, Red Compass Media, Inc., USA

“Finally a book not only so relatable but a massive comic relief that reflects the environment we live in BC/DC (Before COVID/ During COVID). It’s a fly-on-a-wall moment! Thank you, it’s a godsend for my self-care and mental well-being reading this book while sipping G&T.”

—**Ethel Reyes**  
Medical Scientist, Australia

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“This should be standup comedy material.”

—Andre Surya  
Civil Engineer, Indonesia

“Very funny. Especially the chapter, *About Hair*. The big hair episode with her aunts amused me very much! A nice glimpse of how contrasting cultures react to the same situation, the pandemic. Light hearted and presented in a very fun way, Christina’s way :)”

—Jeong Ae Ree  
Artistic Director of New Opera Singapore

“A brilliant storyteller.”

—Shanti Bhattacharya  
Heritage Guide, Singapore

“What an amazing sense of humour! Hilarious and funny insight into people’s behavior — clever observation into life in the supermarket jungle! To me the most touching part of the book is when the sisters say they love each other (in the story, *Motherhood is the greatest job you’ll ever fxxx up*). So simple but huge impact. Well done.”

—Peter Ng  
Entrepreneur, Singapore

“Extremely entertaining and relaxing to read! I am a senior European lady, yet I still find the stories very engaging. This optimistic book is a breath of fresh air. It is just what we all need right now!”

— J.N.  
Retired Principal Mezzo-Soprano of Opera Australia

“Very witty. I like it a lot, especially the part with the aunts doing their hair. I can clearly picture them!”

—Christina Hindle  
Fellow Mum, Austria

“Witty and original! Love it! And, LMAO... the plot twists!”

—Alfani Cahya  
Fulltime Mum of Two, Indonesia

For Review Only

**DIARY OF**

Tales of Panic Buying,

**A FORMER**

Surviving and Finding Humour

**COVIDIOT**

during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Christina Thé

 **Marshall Cavendish**  
Editions

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# For Review Only

**For Felix Cheong**

Writer, Mentor, Friend and Covidol

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## A COVIDIOT'S COMMANDMENTS



“Thou Shall Not Be A Covidiot.”

“Thou Shall Not Covid Thy Neighbour.”

“Thou Shall Stay At Home.”

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## **COVIDIOT** [*Noun, informal*]

### Definitions and synonyms

Someone who continues to go out and socialise despite being told repeatedly to stay at home;

A person who hoards goods (especially toilet paper, masks and sanitisers), denying them from their neighbours;

A person who does not observe social distancing;

Someone who does not wear a mask when outside or in contact with the general public;

Someone who goes immediately to the supermarket in anticipation of the Prime Minister's address;

Someone who ill-treats or evicts front-line medical heroes out of their rental properties, or park at doctors' and nurses' parking lots in hospitals.

Someone who touches others without sanitising their hands, or simply, touches or hugs others in this day and age.



# For Review Only

## **INTRODUCTION** \* 12

## **ON FAMILY & PANIC BUYING** \* 16

- 1 On Family Distancing \* 17
- 2 The Quest for a Hen \* 20
- 3 An Oriental Discovery \* 23
- 4 Turmeric Will Save Us All \* 27
- 5 The Supermarket: A Modern Jungle \* 31
- 6 A Family Affair \* 36
- 7 About Hair \* 44
- 8 Anna \* 49

## **THE BIRTH OF A COVIDOL** \* 60

- 9 A Covidol is Born \* 61
- 10 Soprano in Quarantine, ACT 1 \* 66
- 11 A COVID Fairytale \* 73
- 12 Soprano in Quarantine, ACT 2 \* 77
- 13 The Music Room \* 84
- 14 And I Pronounce You, Man and Wife \* 92
- 15 Go Forth & Multiply \* 100
- 16 The Mask Crusaders and the Second Wave of Covidiots \* 110
- 17 A Nation of Tarzans \* 114
- 18 Coronahair \* 120

# For Review Only

## **ON PARENTING & HOME BASED LEARNING (HBL) \* 124**

- 19 A Strategic Alliance \* 125
- 20 Home Based Learning. A Survivor Recounts Her Tale \* 133
- 21 Motherhood is the Greatest Job You'll Ever Fxxx Up \* 140
- 22 HBL + WFH = WTF \* 149
- 23 And the Horror Based Learning Continues \* 159
- 24 Happy Hour! \* 169

## **ON FRIENDSHIP & OTHER ISSUES \* 175**

- 25 In Eggs We Trust \* 176
- 26 Surprise, Surprise \* 182
- 27 21 Questions: Interview by the 'Porn Stars' \* 193
- 28 Love Thy Neighbour \* 199
- 29 Short Circuited \* 204
- 30 On Resilient Business Models \* 208
- 31 The Onion Challenge \* 212
- 32 On Weird Dietary Options \* 216
- 33 Under One Roof \* 222
- 34 The (Not-So) Secret Garden \* 229
- 35 The New Normal \* 235

## **EPILOGUE: THE ROAD AHEAD \* 241**

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR \* 248**

For Review Only

# INTRODUCTION

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*“When the storm breaks, each man acts in accordance with his own nature. Some are dumb with terror. Some flee. Some hide. And some... spread their wings like eagles and soar on the wind.”*

— Dr John Dee (1527–1608), mathematician.

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Be it on my faraway travels or around my neighbourhood, I have always loved observing human nature and behaviour—both on and off the stage.

I find human beings most intriguing. We are complex, resilient, adaptable, yet at times, comical.

At this current moment, nothing is more interesting than observing human behaviour during this global pandemic of unprecedented scale. Those who survive, truly are living a part of history.

What I also found is that even the most dire of situations can be inundated with precious, humorous moments.

The earlier stories in the book were written with the sole purpose to bring a smile to family and friends who are dear to me, in different

# For Review Only

parts of the world. With so much doom and gloom and negativity that besieged us, I wished to present a light-hearted contrast to lift up their spirits.

My little vignettes unexpectedly became an extended account that was conceived entirely during the global lockdown—a happy yet near impossible feat.

Singing a line of lyrics is not the same as writing a line of text as I soon discovered. Especially while educating and keeping alive my two favourite little humans at home. I am sure it's an experience some of you can relate to.

The book is grouped according to themes around the events of the Coronavirus pandemic. Each chapter is a standalone tale. You can flip to any chapter randomly and not have missed the plot. Packed in manageable bite-sized pieces. Nothing too mentally taxing.

I hereby present to you, stories of challenges and human resilience, of herd mentality and overcoming fear, as seen from a humorous perspective. This is a work of observational fiction inspired by true events and real characters, written with lots of dramatic licence. It may seem like a narrative of others' experiences, but truly, these are our stories together.

Let us always look up and brave adversity with a smile. To those who lost your loved ones to this pandemic, we are united in your grief.

# For Review Only Foreword 15

The facts of our predicament may remain the same, but we have a choice to observe the amusing side of things, or to let our spirits be reduced by circumstances. It is a choice we make every day, wherever we are in the world.

On another note, most of us might have been a Covidiot at some point or another, some more so than others. Here's a cheeky reminder to finally be reborn a Covidol! What could be more appropriate than an account written by a singing (and former) Covidiot.

I hope these short stories remind you of something, or someone. Above all, I hope they bring some light to your day and a smile to your face, as they did to those near and dear to me.

Let us begin.

# For Review Only



## The Supermarket: A Modern Jungle



The plot thickens on a recent phenomenon of men found all over supermarkets (see Chapter 2).

It was generally agreed at this stage that COVID-19 sucks. It mucks up the order of things on so many levels. If we were fortunate enough to still be alive at all.

Take grocery shopping for example which has become a new dilemma for every family.

Out of the members of each household, someone needs to be appointed as the chosen one, i.e. a 'sacrificial tribute' to go out and brave the virus outside in order to buy the essentials.

Of late it seemed that more and more men were taking one for

# For Review Only

the team and reverted to their original role of being the hunter; as befitted their role as head and protector of the family.

Except for one tiny little glitch.... the modern 'jungle' has evolved. In Singapore, it is called NTUC Fairprice, i.e. an affordable supermarket chain meant for peasants (like me).

This created a whole new set of problems of men being tasked to buy a specific list of items, and coming back with a bunch of something else entirely different.

This week I found myself as the default patsy in my family to join the mob in my neighbourhood NTUC, and witnessed for myself this sudden phenomenon.

Why me? (Yes, why me...) Well, the parents were too old and too scared; the kids were too young; the domestic helper was too indispensable; and the brother? He once brought home zucchini instead of cucumber. Not the ideal Tribute.

Channeling *Hunger Games'* Katniss Everdeen, heroically armed with mask and one gallon of sanitiser, I headed over to the jungle. Now you may think this is a lot of liquid but trust me I finished it all before I stepped back through my front door. It's amazing that I haven't had sanitiser poisoning yet.

I scanned the crowd. The ratio of men to women in each aisle was 4:1. The few scattered ladies I spotted went about their business knowing exactly what to grab with Olympic-like speed and accuracy. Sharp. With shark-like strides they hunted. Such Amazons.



# For Review Only

They were a stark contrast to the obviously married men. Each was carrying a shopping list, which from their expressions, might as well be written in hieroglyphs.

They were confused.

Some walked around in circles in the aisles. Some walked up and down the aisle from one end to the other, and back again as if it were a runway. Some were seen on a loop pattern amongst several aisles, like a circle line train, appearing and reappearing at the same spot again. Some were just really, really lost.

Some were looking for that ONE elusive, horror item.

I would guess that elusive item was sanitary napkins, guessing from the masculine crowd forming a messy horizontal line, scanning up and down the party wares section under 'napkins'.

On this note I encountered my neighbour contemplating a row of items, with the word Durex emblazoned on the display rack. I guess people have different priorities during a lockdown.

When I chanced upon him, he was clearly startled and to save face, quickly jumped one step to the next rack. Unfortunately for him, this was where the real sanitary napkins were; which the rest of his confused comrades were looking for.

That rack's order from left to right:

Sanitary Napkins — Birth Control — Infant Formula

Success — Prevention — Fail

# For Review Only

The irony.

I walked on and with a chuckle overheard a gentleman on speakerphone. I presumed from the highly irritated tone that it must have been his wife on the line, “I said mung beans, not long beans. Yesterday you brought back French beans! Aiyoh, I told you, just look at the labels below the products. You go ask the staff which aisle.” (Yes, men would absolutely ask for directions... Not.)

“Dear, beans are beans lah. They are all green what. Why so many kinds of beans?” In his defence, mung beans in Malay is ‘kacang hijau’ which translates as green beans.

Another man had his phone on hands-free mode and it was clear that he had a slightly more understanding wife. He turned left, paused, took three steps forward, paused, one step back, looked right, paused again to listen to instructions, and took an item from the second shelf from the top. It was a blue packet and he carefully read aloud the label before depositing it with a flourish into the shopping trolley with a triumphant look on his face. And off he crashed into another confused married man.

My last pit stop was the eggs section. I haven’t had much success securing a live hen to lay eggs in my condo. I asked a friend if he would chaperone me to go look for live chickens in Singapore and he said it would be dangerous. I asked for whom? He said, for both the chicken and us. I guess the thought of a plucky chicken in the back seat of his mother’s Mercedes was not quite ideal.

# For Review Only

Here, a man was contemplating the many choices of eggs: omega, free-range, kampong, grain-fed, probiotics, etc. How can anyone not be confused? Even I was confused.

I whispered to him with a smile, “Keep it simple. Grab and run. They’re all eggs.”

# For Review Only



## About Hair



The phone rang very close to midnight. It was my mum. We were all night owls but I thought this was rather alarming. These days people only call when it's an emergency, right? I thought somebody had died.

She said, “My sisters are coming here next week. Go find a hairdresser for them. No, not that one you found for me before. He's terrible, cannot make big hair. Find somebody who can comb properly otherwise your Auntie Mei won't be happy.”

By 'comb', my mum meant those big, backcombed hair of her generation. Some call it helmet hair, some call it a beehive, in Singapore they call it *ibu* hair ('ibu' pronounced 'ee-boo', literally means 'mother' or 'madam' in Indonesian).

# For Review Only About Hair 45

Those who are younger may not know but there is a whole group of ladies from our parents' generation who go to a salon to wash their hair and get it styled every week. Some of them have not washed their own hair at home for the past 20 years or more.

Where I came from, big hair is a status symbol; the bigger, the better. If someone gets married, the mother must have the biggest hair out of all the women present at the wedding party. Big hair meant you got your shit together.

So my aunts were coming to Singapore. I guess they had voted against migrating to Timor Leste. Not sure about my uncles.

My aunties always make an annual pilgrimage to Singapore, but this time, they were fleeing COVID-19. Or so they thought. This was just before Singapore realised that unless we shut our borders there would be a mass exodus from neighbouring countries looking for better medical care here. The old dames made it before the cut-off, along with one of my younger, unmarried male cousins. I gathered he was brought along to manage the luggage. Well, we Asians know filial piety: the woman carried you for nine months and expelled you into the world with great pains; if she said you come and carry the luggage, you better come and carry her luggage.

Getting down to business right away, I googled: "Best hairdresser SPACE big hair SPACE old ladies SPACE Singapore."

No satisfactory result. I tried all sorts of combinations of the sentence, alternating the word 'old' for 'senior', 'big' for 'beehive', added the word 'backcomb' and still I was no better off. I told Mum

# For Review Only

this just wasn't a good time. And why couldn't she recommend hers. She said the lady who did her hair was on a sabbatical, afraid of Coronavirus. There was no lockdown yet, but we all could feel it was coming.

I gave a shoutout to several online chat groups I was in to see if anyone's mum could recommend a traditional hairdresser at such a time. This is why one must have friends.

I love all my aunts to bits. Other than this hair business, they were the most cheerful and loving of people. They all doted on me. However, sisters were still going to be sisters at any age, be they 7 or 70. The four sisters bickered over day-to-day things such air conditioning, speed of walking and even angle of photography.

Upon my greeting them at their hotel they remarked how blond I had become and that my hair was a little too flat. I should add more volume to attract more men. Another aunt suggested that I should go for a religious retreat, so I might find enlightenment and following that enlightenment, perhaps a much improved new husband. I thought wryly to myself, yes, because hanging out with people who lived a vow of celibacy would be the best way to acquire new men. My aunts can be quite imaginative.

I thanked them and was not the slightest bit perturbed as I had developed the great skill of selective hearing when in the presence of elders. A skill I'm sure some of you have developed too especially if one was still single and unmarried during Lunar New Year.

# For Review Only About Hair 47

They all expressed themselves most articulately from behind their masks. My aunts were no covidiot. And who says masks were a hindrance from talking, it clearly did not stop them.

When they arrived, their hair were all erect and defied gravity. Few days later, towards the end of the week, was the real trial. I received some leads from friends after searching high and low, that this and that hair salon would have the necessary tools to recreate such a hairstyle. You knew the salons would have one of those bonnet hood dryers, to set the hair. Once it's backcombed and set with hairspray, even a typhoon could not move the hair. That was the idea. It should survive a good portion of the week and even when they sleep; the next day it should look more or less the same. A little less puffy, perhaps, but respectably erect. In any case my second aunt preferred to err on the safe side and slept Superman-style, i.e. face-down. All in the name of beauty.

The hair salons normally were cheaply priced, hence the ladies preferred to wash and blow their hair there frequently. A cause and effect relationship.

My mum stayed home because the car could only fit five people: me, my three aunts and cousin. But lo and behold, the traitor had jumped ship. He was busy with his own errands and left me to deal with the grand dames and their hair.

We found ourselves in an older shopping mall in Orchard. There were two possible hair salons there. Let's call them Salon A and Salon B. Aunt Mei inspected them, was not convinced with Salon B's tools and chose Salon A. Salon A could take two customers

# For Review Only

and Salon B could only take one. They negotiated and sorted themselves out.

It was a good 1.5 hours of brisk walking all over the old shopping mall, waiting until they were all done. Before I left them at the salons I could hear my aunties describing in straightforward English, with animated hands going up and down, which no one can mistake that they meant ‘big’, and ‘backcombed’.

The three of them emerged from the hair salons on opposite sides of the mall at about the same time. One had bigger hair than the others.

“Eh? How come your hair is bigger than mine?”

“Aiyah, I should have gone to your salon instead. This one the curls are too tight. Look like our mum’s.”

Though beauty standards have evolved over the years, women remain stuck to that era in which they looked their very best.

Seen from the car rear-view mirror were my three imports in the backseat, faces all covered with surgical masks.

Off we drove into the sunset, three ‘helmets’ blocking most of the car’s rear windscreen, visible to any one driving behind us.

A tremendous success.



# For Review Only



## The Music Room



What did we lose in April?

“Cancelled!” Everything was cancelled! Concerts, cancelled. Operas, cancelled. Even the puppet shows were cancelled.

There were some events I wish could have been cancelled over the past decade but it certainly were not these.

Coronavirus. The word reminds me of an airplane advertisement that promised, “We’ll take you to places you’ve never been,” upon its fleet going under the sea twice in the same year. I’ve never been to that place. I’m pretty sure those hundreds of people had also never been (and did not wish to have been). That unfortunate advertisement was soon withdrawn, for obvious reasons.

April landed us in strange terrain.

We all had to go through the unfamiliar experience of being cooped up at home with family members and partners 24/7 for months. There is such a thing as too much of a good thing, even if we do get along. Little did we know that we were required to be at home for that long. Our rapid week-by-week transition of emotional roller coaster ranged from trepidation to optimism, to the monumental grievances on depleting dishwashing liquid and the lack of grocery delivery windows. One would spend an hour ordering supplies online, only to discover during checkout that delivery windows remained elusive. Rinse and repeat. Everyday was Groundhog Day.

On top of these daily challenges, we were all suddenly thrust into the limelight and had to become movie stars and tech experts. I'm talking about teachers, lecturers, artists, students, office workers, and most people who had a job.

However, humans are resilient. How fortunate we are to be living in the digital age! Not to be outwitted by the Coronavirus, lectures, lessons, and almost all meetings, could now be shifted online. Except for some minor glitches with regards to this so-called technology that these meetings heavily ride on.

Take for example my fellow musicians and I. We had to swiftly shift to the streaming method in delivering our three main activities of rehearsing, performing and teaching.

# For Review Only

Some parties manoeuvred more successfully than others in adapting to these new circumstances. What I found surprising, for instance, was that children took to online music lessons like ducks to water.

“Yup. I was more like a DJ. Since students muted their mics and turned off their cam, I sometimes felt like I was talking into the void. I was like a DJ on-air,” another lecturer friend who taught a big group further attested.

In actual fact, teaching and learning music online consumed twice the energy of doing so in person. It was after all a vocational thing. One had to be shown how to do it physically and physically replicate it after. Opera singers for example, are vocal athletes. During these online music teaching and learning, we all had to make a strenuous effort to decipher two-dimensional non-verbal cues, with every silence possibly interpreted as a dreaded tech glitch.

The string of endless “What?” or “Sorry, I couldn’t hear you,” repetitions, imbued by missing syllables (or notes, in my case) became our new normal. We figured that out soon enough, but we made do.

On the field of live music presentation, we are after all performers—musicians, singers, dancers, actors. Put us in front of a camera and we will perform.

Rehearsing should be just about the same, or so we thought. How difficult could it be?

# For Review Only

The Music Room 87

Until we discovered that our fates depended entirely on the internet.

As I discovered through my own experiment on rehearsing with a pianist via Zoom, it was akin to being stuck in a dial-up time machine when the rest of the world had gone 4G. When the internet was out of whack, I was out of sync.

In the spirit of adapting, the rehearsals pressed on, but let me tell you of one such saga.

Recently I had to rehearse a piece from Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* for an online recording that we were planning to air during this lockdown period. It was to share the joy of music with the public. I had performed that well-known sacred vocal work previously as the soprano soloist at Singapore's first national theatre and concert venue, the Victoria Concert Hall.

Just to elaborate a bit on the work in layman's terms: it is a baroque piece from the 1700s, a church vocal composition depicting the Stations of the Cross. Its lyrics (written in old church Latin, not Latin as in Latin American) describes the suffering and the steps Jesus Christ took towards His crucifixion at the Cross. In a music store, shelved under the category of Sacred Songs, or arias, as we call them. They are not operas but an earlier form, perhaps opera's predecessor. There were several composers writing their own compositions with the same title.

The piece I happened to be doing out of the 12 solos and duets in the work was titled *Fac ut ardeat cor meum*, a beautiful duet of

# For Review Only

soprano and alto. I'll get on the pronunciation in a moment but the piece was basically a fast chasing, repeated steeplechase of the song title, one after the other, for pretty much the entire song.

The tricky bit was the pronunciation of the lyrics itself (and its unfortunate meaning in modern language) and that the internet kept freezing.

Let's break it down into manageable parts. Latin after all is an archaic language these days that only highly-ranked Princes of the Catholic Church understand. Emeritus Pope Benedict, by his own admission, said that if he had bad news to tell the Archbishops that would potentially ruffle their feathers during his daily sermons, he would deliver it in Latin, because only very few would understand enough Latin to complain.

My solo parts involved me singing, "Fac Ut," predominantly.

'Fac' sounds like 'dark' without the 'r'. Does it remind you of a certain four-letter word? Yes, that is it. You can probably very easily guess how this word is pronounced. It is indeed that highly-versatile (yet misunderstood) four-letter word we are forbidden to say in front of children.

'Ut' on the other hand is pronounced 'Oot', not an Australian 'ute'.

The internet was not at its best that day and its glitches meant the 'oot' parts were skipped quite a few times, and all we could hear were the 'fac' bits.

# For Review Only

It became an aria about 'fxxx's, repeated 50 million times in under three minutes by two women singing high and low. Hey, three minutes is a long time. A lot of things can be achieved in three minutes. Just ask Indonesians and their population of hundreds of millions.

How ironic for the lyric's venerable meaning. This is what happens when we sing songs written by dead people.

After the first two technical glitches, and many missing 'oot's in the making, in his attempt to help us, the frustrated pianist sweetly remarked, "FAC. Loud and proud, you two," referring to the strong, crisp pronunciation of the consonant 'K' at the end of 'fac' each time that word came up. He thought enunciating a muscular 'fac' might help with the internet problem.

Now that about ruined the piece for me. It took all my being not to laugh whilst singing it. For the next two minutes I could not do it. I could not sing it with a straight face. It was distressing.

Channel anger, my Director had instructed, a tip to keep a straight face in such circumstances, when we were practicing for the performance some years back. Channel the feelings of stress and woe. Oh how easy it was to channel those feelings these days.

That was also the same things she helpfully suggested when we both went to a benefit concert in support of a mutual colleague who was performing. At one part of that performance, the prop and singing were so mismatched, involving a mummified, gaping, neon cockatoo resting on the outstretched arm of a garrulously

# For Review Only

dressed male opera singer, who was struggling to reach his supposed high notes in the piece. It was a mini-scene where the hero in the story (i.e. him) had to descend to the abyss to find his dead lover. It was not meant to be a comic piece at all but the combined effect of the incongruous prop and singing were hysterical. We struggled to keep a straight face but I did not manage as well as my esteemed senior.

Of all people I understand fully a performer's pressure to perform in front of a paying audience. It was a tough job and I highly supported the efforts every performer made to bring about a performance. But on this occasion I could no longer hold the fort.

I pretended to cough and employed other ingenious self-distracting methods so as not to laugh during the show, mindful that we were seated right at the very front row facing the performers and there was no escape. At some point I deliberately dropped the whole content of my handbag and pretended to crawl underneath to collect the items scattered on the floor, to the disapproval of other concert goers, just so I could hide my face.

Towards the end of the stuffed cockatoo's aria, I finally pulled open the programme and decided to plaster my face with it, pretending to read. I thought that would be discreet. I only realised later that I had covered my face with the programme upside down.

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The Arts, and theatres all over the world, are in a crisis mode as we speak. Many are wondering just how few of us will be left to continue our craft when the pandemic was over. We make a living

# For Review Only

*The Music Room* 91

not just by performing but also teaching to ensure a regular income. Both fronts are in dire straits. One music teacher friend has sadly conveyed that he was losing students. During this online teaching period, many parents have opted out, as they too are facing their own challenges, and find online music learning too draining.

My Simple Sally explanation is that some paid online initiatives better commence very quickly. Facebook, for one, is trying to let artists charge for online performances, so that we can somehow monetise our crafts, or governments really must come to the rescue. Otherwise the world will end up with one hell of a monochrome society, when the Arts, considered a non-essential, is dispensed with altogether.

On a grassroots level, let us all do our little part to support artists. Lest we wake-up one day and find that they have all become lawyers. When all you have left on TV is the weather forecast, how blue will thy life be then, oh, little one?



# For Review Only



## The Mask Crusaders and The Second Wave of Covidiots



Towards the tail end of the lockdown in Singapore, I witnessed something astonishing first-hand. It was the proliferation of the second wave of Covidiots.

In anticipation of measures being relaxed, people had started to congregate in large groups, like along the river at Robertson Walk. Dozens of them at a time.

On my way out to the grocery store the other day, I encountered this grandpa without a mask. He was not running, he was just strolling along the jogging path, admiring the river. Not two metres away from the grandpa, directly on his 3 o'clock direction, most shockingly was my daughter's former teacher and his young family, out and about in the neighbourhood. Iron Man, Miss Potts and

# For Review Only

their infant daughter were heading to the grocery store without safety masks on. I guess a family who can fly around in iron suits could afford to.

Along the way, people who didn't look like they ever exercised have now become marathon runners, dragging their highly visible excess kilos with them.

Then there were the groups of Filipina domestic helpers, gathering in droves. Pushing prams together, not distancing at all, masks barely covering their noses.

Seems like a \$300-\$1,000 fine was no longer meaningful enough to discourage such behaviour. To me that amount was terrifying. On the other hand I was starting to wonder if these people with too much money at their disposal could be my friend. I promise I'd be a very good friend. I was open to receiving donations: food, wine, gold bars, just not somebody else's husband please.

I wondered what it would take for people to take things seriously? As we speak, the country where I was born and everywhere else, people were dropping flat on their faces daily like nobody's business—at the train station, on the road, at the bank. Yes, they must have all died of flu or tinea. No, not AIDS. No one's had that much fun these days.

I noticed that the Germans, always on the forefront of technology, had pioneered the use of swimming noodles secured on top of people's heads, as in hats. An ingenious social distancing measure, made mandatory for their café patrons.

# For Review Only

“This be you and me soon,” I mass-messed friends wryly.

Alright, world. We gotta up the ante. Soon we would be released back into the wilderness, out of lockdown. The world needs to come up with a Covidiot spray. Something that would turn people into frogs or turn their facial colour purple (or worse, turn them into their mother-in-law), if they were not social distancing or a non-mask wearing Covidiot. Short of throwing a bag full of cobras at a group of congregating Covidiots, I'd say a Covidiot spray might be our best bet.

On this note, forces on the Covidol opposition bandwagon have taken matters into their own hands. Taking the higher ground of civic duty at the cost of possibly having tomatoes thrown at them, they had taken it upon themselves to be the mask crusaders.

A mask crusader had graciously reminded a fellow bus-rider that his mask had fallen below his nose. Perks of public transportation. The Covidiot looked as if he was told he was not wearing any pants (though one could not help but compare the two parallels). If looks could shrink anyone, my friend would be an ant by now, so much for public spiritedness.

Another mask crusader walked past a man sitting on a bench without a mask, with his laptop on, without a care in the world. He was accompanied by a bottle of beer. The mask crusader reminded the lounging Covidiot that he should be wearing a mask, and that he should be at home. Ignored, the mask crusader decided to flash his phone camera (a global weapon of popularity destruction), to take a photo of the Covidiot.

# For Review Only

Alas, a mere 1% battery power left remaining. He could but just take one photo before the phone died. Covidiot with the laptop was none the wiser though, and hastily put his mask on before scurrying home.

I guess it is true: with battery comes great responsibility.

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## About the Author

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Christina and her family have called Singapore home for over two decades. Born in Indonesia, she subsequently went on to experience life in several other countries including Australia and the UK, and merrily collected four degrees along the way; half for herself, half for her beloved parents.

As an amiable observer of people, she finds human nature fascinating and a great source of inspiration.

As a soprano she trained at the Royal Academy of Music in London and has enjoyed singing at the Carnegie Hall in New York.

Today, Christina regularly appears in Singapore's opera scene and writes humorous realistic fiction while leading life as a modern single mother.