

Thursday Night and a Sing-along ‘Sung Alone’: The Experiences of a Self-employed Performer During the Pandemic

Work, Employment and Society

1–12

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DOI: 10.1177/09500170211045830

journals.sagepub.com/home/wes



Philip Hancock 
University of Essex, UK

Melissa Tyler
University of Essex, UK

Mark Godiva*
Musician, UK

Abstract

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on those working in the UK’s creative economy, and particularly its entertainment sector. This article explores the experiences of Mark Godiva, a self-employed musician whose livelihood has been radically threatened by the virus and its associated restrictions. Mark’s story highlights both the continuities and challenges that have been created for those working on the front line of what is a dramatically altered cultural landscape. It illustrates the continuing precarity of his work, and how the need for additional entrepreneurial skills, beyond simply being a performer, have become more important than ever. At the same time, it considers some of the technical, affective, spatial, and even existential challenges associated with working over a range of social media platforms that performers such as Mark have experienced.

Keywords

COVID-19, creative economy, entrepreneurial skills, performers, precarity, self-employment, social media

*Mark Godiva is a pseudonym

Corresponding author:

Philip Hancock, Essex Business School, University of Essex, Colchester CO4 3SQ, UK.

Email: phancock@essex.ac.uk

Introduction

COVID-19 has posed a major challenge to the UK and the people living here. At the time this article was written, successive national and regional lockdowns have combined with a changing landscape of legally enforceable requirements, such as social distancing and other safety measures, designed to limit the spread of infection. On 23 March 2020, the government ordered all non-essential businesses and venues to close;¹ at the time of writing, many of these have yet to reopen. This has, albeit somewhat unevenly, not only had a deleterious impact on the economy writ large but on people's everyday working lives and livelihoods. In many instances, measures designed to contain successive waves of the virus have denied individuals their source of income by placing legal restrictions on their ability to practise their trade or profession. Self-employed workers within the performing arts sector are one group that has been particularly affected, not least because of the disproportionate number of people working in the sector who are self-employed.²

While the moniker of performing arts covers a multitude of performance styles, acts, working arrangements, and even industries, it is widely considered to be a sector where to be self-employed is characterised by precarity, accompanied by the need for an enhanced entrepreneurial sensibility in order to secure work. Indeed, while often lauded as an integral part of the UK's creative economy, the work of such performers has existed in something of a liminal space between skilled and talented professionals and over-worked and frequently underpaid hawkers of wares and services.

The impact of COVID-19, however, has been to devastate this already fragile working ecology. The closure – perhaps permanently – of scores of performance venues, combined with other restrictions on what kinds of performances can and cannot take place, has placed the UK's 300,000+ self-employed performers (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2020) out of reach of those live audiences they rely on both financially and, just as often, existentially. At the same time, however, there are many who have endeavoured to embrace alternative opportunities to perform and connect with those willing to support their work.

At the forefront of these changes have been those performers who have taken to social-media platforms such as *Facebook* to stream their work – sometimes live, sometimes pre-recorded, and sometimes a creative combination of both – to what, in many instances, have become global audiences unfettered by the traditional limitations of time and space. In this article, we offer up for consideration the experiences, practices, and reflections of one such performer, Mark Godiva, providing a snapshot of his working life during this very specific and turbulent time.³

An accomplished musician, arranger, and singer, who has also contributed to several bands as both a keyboardist and arranger, prior to the pandemic Mark had built a regional and national profile predominantly through his traditional sing-along shows. Appearing not only in residency at a number of prestigious pubs and clubs in London's West End, Mark had also performed regularly at festivals and functions around the UK and beyond, for over 10 years prior to the outbreak of COVID-19. He was also mindful of the importance of maintaining a prominent social media presence and well-managed public profile given the frequently precarious nature of being a self-employed musician and performer in the eponymous 'gig economy'. While this brought with it many challenges, they were

nothing compared to those he has had to face as a consequence of the arrival of COVID-19 and the disappearance, almost overnight, of his livelihood.

This article considers some of these challenges and how Mark has adapted to meet them. In doing so, we place established sociological concerns such as precarious work, emotional labour, and the challenges of work-life balance, not only in the context of being a self-employed performer, but of being one during the pandemic. A time when, perhaps not unsurprisingly, the live performer's traditional working environment has rapidly unravelled.

We open with a consideration of the impact of the pandemic on the performing arts in the UK. This is followed by a brief discussion of these aforementioned concerns as they have been explored and developed in the sociology of work and employment, particularly as they pertain to working in the creative industries. Finally, we shift the focus specifically to Mark, who tells his own story about life as a performer and trying to sustain a living on the front line of what is a significantly altered professional landscape.

The trials and tribulations of life as a performer

The impact of COVID-19 on the performing arts across the UK cannot be underestimated. Figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) show that out of all UK industries it is the arts, entertainment and recreation sector that has suffered the largest sectoral decrease in revenue.⁴

In London's West End – the heart of the UK's entertainment sector – some worst-case scenario estimates suggest that by 2024 the economic output of the West End arts and culture sector could decline by 97%.⁵ Not unsurprisingly, this has had a significant impact on the workforce with reports in February 2021 of the sector having the highest proportion of its workforce on partial or full furlough leave (ONS, 2020),⁶ and the sector suffering the highest number of job losses since the start of the pandemic. The latest figures show that job opportunities in the arts and entertainment sector in the period January–March 2021 were down 79% on the same months last year, with live entertainment being reported as 'by far the worst hit part of the economy'.⁷

Such figures only provide a one-sided account of the impact of COVID-19 on the sector and on those who work in it, however. What they omit are the lived realities and longer-term consequences for self-employed performers and supporting staff, many of whom have been unable to access government support during the pandemic.⁸ Nor does their situation look likely to improve. At the time of writing, major entertainment venues are facing unsustainable losses while many smaller settings have already seen their doors close possibly for the last time (Sweeny, 2020), with industry groups fearing that over 80% of independent, 'grassroots' venues may not re-open.⁹

This is particularly true of those night-time venues that depend not only on the consumption of the entertainment itself – often alongside bar sales – but equally the 'atmospheric' (Böhme, 1993) qualities of the venue that emerge from the intimacy and closeness generated by simple, but crucially immersive and proximal, forms of interaction such as communal singing and dancing.

In response, bodies such as the *Musicians' Union* have undertaken a COVID-19 impact survey which suggests that around 34% of musicians are considering abandoning their

musical careers.¹⁰ More directly, *Equity* – the UK trade union for creative workers – has organised national demonstrations and online rallies,¹¹ while the *Incorporated Society of Musicians*, along with the ‘Musicians’ Movement, have taken to both lobbying the government and running social media campaigns, such as *#MakeMusicWork*, in order to press for the introduction of, for example, box-office top-ups and subsidy payments for performers.¹²

At a more individual level, however, many performers have found themselves adrift, and left to their own devices to secure a viable living and to sustain a sense of artistic identity. While this has taken several forms, it has tended to rely on their ability to continue to perform to a live audience, albeit one that is remotely distanced and often unseen, connecting to performers (and other audience members) through social media and online platforms.

That many self-employed performers have been sufficiently adaptable in the face of the impact of the pandemic should not come as a surprise, however. While the acquisition of advanced digital skills might not have been high on their agendas previously, existing research has demonstrated how sustaining a living as a performer can require what are often highly entrepreneurial acts of self-creation (Bain, 2005; Butler and Russell, 2018; Dean, 2005; Hoedemaekers, 2018), frequently undertaken in the context of precarious working conditions and an uncertain labour market (Sutherland et al., 2020). This means that the skills required are not simply artistic or creative, but also those more commonly associated with running a small business, including marketing and merchandising, networking, negotiating, operations, supply chain management and so on (Blackburn et al., 2017).

As Butler and Russell (2018) observe in their study of stand-up comedians, the writing and telling of jokes is only half the story. In what is a largely unstructured labour market, the on-going negotiation of relationships with producers and promoters and other intermediaries is vital in order to secure work; as one of their interviewees put it, ‘every different gig is like a different career battle . . . promoter by promoter’ (Butler and Russell, 2018: 1677 and 1683). This is especially the case within a context in which self-employed performers are reliant on, as they put it, their own ‘repertoire of emotional stratagems to secure work, negotiate pay, and cope with ubiquitous insecurity’.

Similarly, self-promotion and networking, especially via social media platforms such as *Twitter*, *Instagram* and *Facebook*, has become an increasing preoccupation, driven by the need to establish and maintain a personal brand that will appeal to potential employers and clients (Duffy and Pooley, 2019), not to mention audiences. For many self-employed performers who recognise the importance of actively managing their social media feeds in order to secure bookings, and to build an actual, or potential, fan-base this has become a vital skill. Yet this need to be an active businessperson – one equally focused on everything from self-promotion and networking to merchandising and financial self-management – can result in forms of emotional dissonance and ‘fractured identities’ whereby performers feel that they are potentially prostituting their art in the name of commerce and employability (Hoedemaekers, 2018: 1368).

A new landscape

While the landscape before spring 2020 is different from the one experienced subsequently by self-employed performers, there are some important continuities. In particular, their

work was and remains precarious; the difference in the wake of COVID-19 is that it is likely to be even more so if not, as alluded to earlier, simply unsustainable.

Further, for those who have successfully adapted, at least in part, to performing online, the shift will have almost inevitably intensified the need to possess and practise entrepreneurial and technological skills. These include not only a capacity for self-promotion and financial management, but also the acumen and confidence needed to successfully present work over a myriad of social media platforms – with each platform often serving different demographics and interests – while nurturing and sustaining an online fan-base often without the immediacy of an audience response.

At the same time, it is probable that the emotional and aesthetic challenges have increased. While little comparable research currently exists to use as a yardstick, Sutherland et al.'s (2020) study of gig work through an online platform suggests some of the emotional challenges that self-employed performers might currently be facing, and which are likely to intensify. These include not only the specific challenges of sustaining a professional profile as a performer, but also the more general demands of navigating the boundary conditions associated with working from home that research on the impact of COVID-19 on the workforce more generally has reported so far. These involve, for example, the shifting configurations of domestic responsibility (Craig and Churchill, 2020) as well as the changing contours of workspace, identity and work/life balance, and the interpersonal stresses that these can generate (Petriglieri, 2020), all of which appear pertinent in this context. Further, navigating how one appears online – factoring in everything from dress style, through to camera angles, background, sound and lighting – within the context of a domestic environment has been a challenge faced by many workers since March 2020 (Shortt and Izak, 2020). This can be acutely felt by performers especially, when combined with the absence of embodied interaction and ‘resonance’ with fellow performers (Graber and Sumera, 2020), and of the affective reassurance provided by a live audience. The effect of these challenges and absences on their sense of self-esteem and identity (Honneth, 1996) are, amongst other considerations, matters of both interest and concern.

And it is to these issues that we now turn, through the account provided by Mark Godiva of his own frontline experience of the challenges and opportunities created by COVID-19 and his struggle to continue doing the work he loves as a live performer.¹³

Musical ambitions – Mark’s story

I’d always enjoyed making music. While I didn’t take to formal piano lessons as a boy, I learned enough to develop my own style and approach. I was also involved as a youngster in the Scout Association and their Gang Shows; a form of variety performance featuring songs, dancing, and sketches. I eventually moved to London to study biochemistry where I continued my involvement in musical and theatrical societies. Having realised that life in a science lab was not for me, I took the decision that I wanted to pursue a career in music. This led to work as a gigging keyboardist and singer, as well as a musical arranger for a number of theatrical shows both in London and around the UK.

About seven years ago, I was playing with a 1920s style dance band that was appearing at a vintage musical festival. After the first night’s gig a few of us went to the onsite

pub where there was an old, out of tune piano. After a few drinks it seemed like a good idea to start playing some traditional sing-along tunes, and before I knew it the place had erupted in song. The same thing happened on the second and third nights, by which time I realised I might be onto something.

Over the course of the next couple of years, as well as featuring at the same festival, I started advertising the sing-along and found myself getting gigs across London and beyond. Some of these were in pubs and clubs, but a lot were also at private events, for example weddings, as well as in settings such as residential homes. Combined with other work playing and arranging for bands, it quickly became clear that I could make a reasonable living out of it combining it with the income from my wife's full-time job.

Things just took off from there really. I released my first sing-along CD in 2015 and started getting more and more gigs. Then, in 2016, I started performing regularly for a London pub chain, doing promotional work and being offered a residency in one of their prestigious West End pubs every Thursday evening. Not only did this create a more regular following for my act, but I also got to be seen by tourists not only from across the UK but all over the world, some of whom perhaps thought that all London pubs feature traditional sing-alongs like mine! This led me to set up a dedicated sing-along page on *Facebook*, which I used largely to let fans of my act find out about appearances, tickets, and other things I was up to. In fact, it was all going really well with a new CD having just been released and a full diary of gigs setting me up for the future. Then COVID-19 landed.

At first, as was the case for everyone I guess, I had no idea how things were going to pan out. Certainly, it was all starting to look pretty scary by mid-March when I played what turned out to be my last gig for quite some time at a small event in London. In fact, the next day I was suffering from a cough and a bit of a temperature and went into self-isolation with my family as the government was advising, losing a number of gigs in the process. By the Thursday of that week, I was already feeling better but I had to stay in quarantine for another 10 days or so, meaning that I would miss my evening's residency gig.

As a way to fill the space, I decided to have a go at live streaming the sing-along on my *Facebook* page from my study at home. While it wasn't the first time that I'd done this, having live streamed from a café a couple of years before, it was the first time that I'd tried it from home on my own equipment and using *Facebook* in this way. And what an audience it was! While I'd advertised it through social media, I was stunned by what appeared to be over 750 people watching me singing along to myself that evening and sending me money via PayPal.

While it was obvious, even by then, that the virus was going to cause real problems for somebody in my line of work, the government announcement that shut down pretty much everything a week later still came as a real blow. I had effectively become unemployed overnight, and while I am fortunate to have a wife who works in a relatively secure job, and who has always been our main earner, we have a young son to support, a mortgage to pay, and the job and professional identity that I have worked hard to build up over the years seemed to be disappearing into the ether.

At first, when gig cancellations came in, I was angry, especially given that the initial lockdown spanned some important dates for me. Over time, however, I came to terms with the situation and developed a more stoic attitude to it all, but it has certainly affected my mental health; especially as my 'act' is such a part of who I am, and vice versa. What

became clear, however, was that if I was going to be able to keep doing what I love and contributing what I considered to be my fair share to keeping a roof over our heads, then I was going to have to find my own way out of this situation.

From pub sing-alongs to home comforts

Being a self-employed performer, I am lucky to have developed a few skills over the years. While the days of organising contracts might be temporarily on hold, I'm adept, for example, at using social media as a promotional tool and developing what you might call a reasonably strong 'brand image' around my act. Not that any of this matters, of course, if I can't perform for a paying audience. And while my experience of streaming the week before had shown me that not only getting an audience but getting one that would offer to make donations in lieu of my income was possible, the problem was how to sustain that audience and how to keep them donating. That was going to be the tricky bit.

One of the main challenges I faced in this respect was a relative lack of material. As any performer will tell you, one set list or act can keep you going for years. Apart from, for example, a few regulars who come back to hear the same stuff each week, most of the punters I entertain on a Thursday evening are first timers. This means that I can, by and large, perform the same songs; or at least select them from a well-established repertoire. This also goes for when I'm playing at different venues or events.

Getting the same people to watch the live stream week in and week out meant that I would have to be constantly learning new material either in response to online requests, which has become an integral part of the show, or just simply to keep things fresh. This means that a one-hour show can now take days to prepare, including researching and learning new material as well as preparing a new downloadable sing-along songbook each week. Not that this is all bad. I really enjoy the excuse it gives me to explore and share more songs than I normally could. Nonetheless, it increases the amount of work and preparation I have to do for each weekly gig.

Throughout the original weeks of lockdown between March and July, and then into the summer holiday period, this was particularly stressful as it had to be combined with the additional work of juggling home-schooling and entertaining our eight-year-old son, while my wife continued to work full-time from home. While I had rarely earned enough, even prior to the pandemic, to be the primary breadwinner, I had always contributed my fair share to the household and we simply couldn't afford to lose my income.

More recently, it has also collided with some building works at home that have forced me to move out of the study and set up downstairs. This means I now have to prepare and rehearse in the living room as well as rearrange the furniture every time I'm streaming (whereas the study had a phone tripod mounted to a bookshelf and was pretty much plug and play!). As well as my wife working from home full-time, while the schools have been shut, I have been largely responsible for my son's schooling during the day. So this has certainly heightened tensions at home with me having to sometimes rehearse later into the evening and taking up family space when doing so. Although I admit we have had it fairly easy in this regard, knowing of others trying to do the same thing from a one-bedroom flat.

At the end of the day though, preparing, rehearsing, and performing downstairs all means that not only am I more self-conscious about the noise I am making for others, but

it makes it even harder to separate work from home life, blurring the two in ways that I find really difficult at times. To be honest, I'm increasingly aware of how much I miss being on the road and getting out and doing gigs, not just the performance itself and the whole ritual of travelling, setting up, playing, but also being able to 'come home' at the end of it all.

Not that the stresses end when the streaming itself starts, of course. As well as being limited by the size and layout of the room, and of remaining mindful of our son sleeping either in the room next door, or upstairs, while the show is on, I also often struggle with the technical limitations of performing online. This has been a new way of using *Facebook* for me and also, as I quickly found out, for example, my home broadband is not up to the demands of live streaming.

This means that I have to rely on the 4G connection of my mobile phone that also serves as my camera. And while its signal is more reliable, it's not infallible, and it only takes a drop in signal for a minute or two to quickly lose viewers who are unlikely to return. There is also the additional cost. I decided to invest in what to me was pretty expensive capital equipment, such as a new microphone, mixer, and audio interface for my iPhone, in order to try and offer the best quality performance possible.

Perhaps the biggest challenge I've faced, however, is trying to convey the almost bawdy atmosphere of a sing-along on which my performance relies, through a virtual medium where I can't see or hear people at home, and they can't see or hear each other. It's kind of a sing-along 'sung alone' which can be tricky to keep going, not only because I don't know if anybody out there is really enjoying it, but also because for this kind of performance you really need the audience's singing to help lift and carry you along, to give you that 'spark'.

In fact, when I'm in full flow in a pub I can often let the audience take the lead and I can back off and rest vocally for moments to pace myself in my high energy show. On *Facebook*, I'm carrying the actual event all myself.

Having said all of this, what live streaming on *Facebook* has turned out to be great for is providing a way for the audience to register their enjoyment and participation through the 'comments' function and this is where the sing-along has now become a real team effort. As well as having a longstanding associate keep an eye (remotely of course) on various other social media streams while I'm performing, my wife has become integral to the show,¹⁴ reading out comments and announcing shout-outs as they appear in the *Facebook* feedback section on another machine. This, along with my son's occasional appearances, has made it a real family affair and also gives me a moment to rest between songs, grab a sip of my drink and think about where I am going next.

Not only that, it's how I receive live requests during the show and it has also become a way that people join in, often by noting their appreciation of certain songs, posting relevant comments or emojis, and even telling brief stories about important memories they might attach to a certain tune. And despite not being able to read the comments at a distance on my phone (that's working as the camera), I can gauge the emojis, 'likes' and 'hearts' as I see them fly by on the screen which is actually a heart-warming thing to follow while I'm playing and helps replace that lack of physical feedback I'm used to.

In fact, what is perhaps the most exciting and gratifying thing about this new way of working is the admittedly unintentional creation of what has become a virtual 'global community' of fans around the world. They tune in each week and increasingly post

greetings and comments to each other during the stream. And this has been quite an interesting shift, I guess, in that rather than playing to a group of often rather raucous singers out for a good time, I now have many fans who are genuinely interested in, and engaged with, the type of music hall songs I like to perform. Not only in how they ‘sound’, but also their history and legacy as well.

To nurture this, my wife and I have also started holding an after-show virtual ‘lock-in’ whereby we stream live, again via *Facebook*, discussing the show, the kinds of music I perform, but also answering questions about what is often everyday trivia about our lives and the world around us. It’s become an important part of our lives and something that, generally, we really enjoy. Don’t get me wrong, it’s not always easy. There are times when we might have had a difficult day, with various tensions and pressures playing out, and we are really doing it for the camera and the audience, but it is all very much part of the appeal, I think.

We have become another family to share these times with, providing both a kind of home comfort as well as a connection to others. We’ve received a not-insignificant number of unsolicited cards and gifts over the months – which just goes to show how the sing-along has really helped people through these bizarre and challenging times.

And I have to admit, this community does play a really important role in helping to keep us afloat financially and justify what I do ‘for a living’. When I first started doing the lockdown live streams, I was neither comfortable nor confident about asking for donations via what we call a virtual tip jar. About the best I could manage was to tell people about my CDs and where they could order them if they wanted to, and that was it.

Since then, however, I have learned to not only ‘mention’ the fact that people can, if they wish, donate during the show, but I have come to understand that this community is a way of raising my profile and generating a larger potential audience for gigs when the pandemic is over. Funnily enough, this group is now also a source of ideas for merchandising. As I said, I’ve always tried to maintain a strong brand image and this has now come into its own via everything from tea-towels and mugs, to tote bags and even Christmas tree baubles – all items ‘demanded’ by members of this group.

Not, I should add, that I make a lot of money out of this stuff. I sell it as near to cost as makes sense. What it helps to do though, is keep the fan-base engaged. So, while I’ve watched the viewing figures fall away since the heady days of the first lockdown, I’m still getting a steady figure of around two hundred live views a week. Considering that a lot of people watch in groups that means I can in fact add perhaps a third onto that number which is pretty good going.

Combine this with the two to three hundred views each performance gets after it has been uploaded to *YouTube* and it is, ironically, an awful lot more people than would be able to see me live in the pub on a Thursday night. How long this will continue for is, of course, something I can only imagine at this stage. All I can do is take one day at a time and see how things unravel and the direction the pandemic takes.

The future

In the time I have been working on this account, things haven’t really got any better. I played a few live gigs towards the end of the summer to small socially distanced

audiences outside, but that was it. Since then, a new lockdown came into effect and despite government assistance to some of the big players such as major theatres and venues, my end of the entertainment market is still pretty much on its knees, even as things start to tentatively open up again as vaccination gets under way. Christmas would normally be a time when I would have more work than I could fit in. And while I got some private live streaming gigs during the Christmas period, it wasn't a patch on my income pre-COVID. So, the whole of 2020 was a write-off really. Not only for me of course, but for everybody else I know who is, or was, working in my small corner of the industry.

Will it recover? Well, like everybody else, I hope so! For me, of course, until the virus is really under control and people feel safe and confident enough to go out, things are going to be difficult. After all, a good sing-along is all about people being packed together while effectively projecting 'aerosol' all over the place. Until then, therefore, I am going to have to continue to develop my online presence. And it's not too bad.

I have good days and not so good days, but while I would hate to drift into being a predominantly online performer, I have a new album in the works, various new online collaborations in the pipeline, as well as a few that have already come to fruition. Numbers for my regular Thursday night stream are staying steady and the global community we've built is actually growing.

So, it remains an unsure situation and, to a certain extent, I am still surviving both on my wits and some plain old hard work; and perhaps in that sense at least, the pandemic hasn't really changed things all that much. Well, apart from the fact that I now seem to spend a lot of time singing into a mobile phone and hoping that whoever's at the other end is singing along.

Acknowledgements

Philip Hancock and Melissa Tyler would like to thank Mark Godiva (pseudonym) for collaborating on the article and sharing his story and experiences. Thanks also go to the three anonymous reviewers for their constructive engagement and advice.

Funding

The authors disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the British Academy/Leverhulme Trust whose award (SRG20\201393) helped make this research possible.

ORCID iD

Philip Hancock  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0229-5669>

Notes

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-businesses-and-premises-to-close> (accessed 15 July 2017).
2. ONS report that approximately 4.4 million workers in the UK are self-employed/freelance, accounting for 16% of the workforce. This compares to approximately 336,000 people working specifically in the live performance/entertainment sectors who are self-employed/freelance, constituting a disproportionate 70–80% of workers, depending on the sector, accounting for

- approximately 18% of all the UK's self-employed/freelance workforce – see <https://www.ipse.co.uk/policy/research/the-self-employed-landscape/the-self-employed-landscape-report-2020.html> (accessed 15 July 2017).
3. For clarity, our focus is on the months between March 2020, when the UK government announced a national lockdown and closure of all live venues, and April 2021 (the time of writing).
 4. At the end of 2019, the live arts and culture sectors were reported to be worth £10.47 billion to the UK economy, representing 0.5% of economy activity. By the end of 2020, this revenue level had dropped by 46% – see <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9018/> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 5. <https://heartoflondonbid.london/worst-case-covid-19-scenario-could-cause-a-near-total-wipe-out-of-the-west-ends-cultural-sector/> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 6. ONS reported that over 75% of workers in live entertainment were on furlough (60% on full furlough), compared to 60% of the general workforce (of which, only 20% were on full furlough) – <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/feb/03/the-uks-covid-19-unemployment-crisis-in-six-charts> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 7. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/apr/26/the-guardian-view-on-reopening-the-arts-behind-the-scenes-all-is-not-well> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 8. <https://freelancersmaketheatrework.com/bigfreelancerreport/> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 9. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/music-venues-one-year-of-lockdown-reopen-help-donate-2906277> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 10. <https://www.musiciansunion.org.uk/Home/News/2020/Sep/The-Government-Must-Do-More-Covid-Impact-Survey>. Approximately 52,000 people in the UK work as professional musicians, of whom over 70% are self-employed – see <https://www.ukmusic.org/news/uk-music-demands-more-help-for-self-employed-hit-by-coronavirus-crisis/> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 11. <https://www.equity.org.uk/news/2020/september/panto-parade-to-highlight-continued-need-for-covid-19-support-on-30-september/> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 12. <https://www.ism.org/news/ism-announces-partnership-musicians-movement> (accessed 15 July 2017).
 13. While Mark Godiva is a non-academic participant in a larger project exploring the impact of COVID-19 on self-employed performers, this narrative was generated specifically for *On the Front Line* through a series of interviews and informal discussions with him, and this is a fully co-authored account of his story.
 14. Mark's wife isn't paid for this work as such, but any income generated by the weekly sing-alongs forms part of their shared household resources.

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Philip Hancock is Professor of Work and Organisation Studies and a member of the Centre for Work, Organisation and Society at Essex Business School, University of Essex, UK. His research interests include the affective and atmospheric dimensions of work and its organisation, the critical theory of Axel Honneth, and the work of freelance and self-employed performers in the wake of COVID-19.

Melissa Tyler is Professor of Work and Organisation Studies and a member of the Centre for Work, Organisation and Society at Essex Business School, University of Essex. With Philip Hancock, she is a co-ordinator of the Centre's 'Future of Creative Work' cluster. Melissa's research focuses on gender, feminist theory and embodied experiences of work. Her recent books include *Soho at Work* (Cambridge University Press, 2020) and *Judith Butler and Organization Theory* (Routledge, 2019).

Mark Godiva (pseudonym) is a self-employed musician.

Date submitted November 2020

Date accepted August 2021