Transcript from


**May 17, 2021**

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Andrea Lapp: Welcome to today's webinar coven 19 testing toolkit webinar series lessons from the entertainment industry testing as a as a mitigation strategy to get back on set Dr GG ground ball will now begin.

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00:00:20.400 --> 00:00:30.360
Gigi Gronvall: Thank you all for joining us today i'm gigi brown ball senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for health, security and an associate professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg school of public health.

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Gigi Gronvall: Today is our third installment of the webinar series on coven 19 testing strategies featuring best practices from leaders.

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Gigi Gronvall: This webinar series can be found on our coven 19 testing toolkit which is available online and we'll put the link in the chat.

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Gigi Gronvall: The toolkit provides essential information for organizations of all sizes, seeking to develop or adapt their coven 19 testing strategies to fit their needs.

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Gigi Gronvall: testing, as you know, is crucial to stopping the spread of stars coby to whether taking a test prescribed by your doctor picking up a test from a pharmacy.
Gigi Gronvall: or choosing a test for your employees it's important to choose the right type of test provide the most useful information.

Gigi Gronvall: Testing services are also now available that offer tests and testing strategies to organizations, so our toolkit gives you information about.

Gigi Gronvall: All the different kinds of tests, the testing services and everything else to help you figure out a good strategy.

Gigi Gronvall: This project is funded by the lie to help philanthropies and the coordinating bedding more foundation.

Gigi Gronvall: After this panel we're going to answer questions from the audience, so please submit questions in the Q amp a box, we will answer as many questions as possible.

Gigi Gronvall: Today we are talking with meredith lavender and marci Ulan.

Gigi Gronvall: My meredith and marci have been business partners for over 15 years and have worked together as executive producers and show runners for productions, including HBO Max is the flight attendant.

Gigi Gronvall: ABC nashville fox is proven innocent and the gifted, among others, so meredith and marcy will provide insights into how they use testing as one of the public health tools to resume production safely meredith over to you.
Meredith Lavender: Thank you so much dd and thank you for having us here today, and we want to lead by saying that the thoughts and ideas that we're sharing today are our anecdotal from our experience.

Meredith Lavender: and not necessarily representative of the studio itself, either we wanted to be able to share kind of.

Meredith Lavender: All the frontline experience we had taking a big crew back into production so just wanted to leave with that.

Meredith Lavender: And we thought it'd be helpful to provide a little bit of context for what a normal day in production would look like in order to kind of help people grasp the you know not not magnitude, but the magnitude for in our world of.

Meredith Lavender: getting things back up and running production so essentially on any given day there's about 13 hours of work that gets done if you're running on a true schedule you'll hear stories of people working 16 hour days that's usually, when things aren't going very well.

Meredith Lavender: But that includes 12 hours of work and an hour for lunch, and that is all including timelines all the different unions separate represented.

Meredith Lavender: In production, and we have anywhere from I would say, a light damn set would be around you know, maybe 100 people.

Meredith Lavender: In the TV world of big big damn said might be, you know 300 people and then, if you have something really extraordinary like that we did on national sometimes.
Meredith Lavender: You can have seven or 800 people on set if you're doing a big concert scene and you have you know 500 extras etc.

Meredith Lavender: To kind of fill in the crowd so you can have a lot of people on set at any given point in time, and any given day the way the workday starts, as you have your crew usually.

Meredith Lavender: shows up at the same time, your actors show up to start their process and pre was doing everything from reading legs set dressing.

Meredith Lavender: Sometimes there's construction going on for future work and all these things kind of happen simultaneously with the entire career working in their different sections on on your soundstage at any given point.

Meredith Lavender: During the day that happens multiple times throughout the day to have people working you know versus shooting versus being quiet if they're shooting and then on.

Meredith Lavender: location, if you have the same kind of thing you vote in people are loading in they're setting up they're getting ready to shoot they're putting lights and are getting the cameras into the location and ready to work, so you have a lot of people coming and going into the interact.

Marcie Ulin: maresca so yeah so normal like typical actors journey through their morning would be the actor would some some actors drive themselves to set some are picked up by transco and.
Marcie Ulin: brought to set.

Marcie Ulin: They usually go straight into hair and makeup where they are interacting with their hair and makeup people and that's clearly a lot of in directly in people's faces time.

Marcie Ulin: Then they tend to go to set for a rehearsal and rehearsals happen and waves so you'll have your actors come in and they'll usually do a private rehearsal first, of whatever scene is up first of the day that involves.

Marcie Ulin: The actor, the director, the writer, the producer that's their onset and you kind of walk through and figure out exactly how they're going to block and shoot.

Marcie Ulin: The scene, where the cameras are going to go where the actors are going to be and everything else.

Marcie Ulin: And then there's a second rehearsal that happens where you open it up and truly almost every department head comes in.

Marcie Ulin: And usually stand around the edges and watches, because they have to be able to get everything set up all the actor finishes their process so, then the actor leaves and goes back to.

Marcie Ulin: hair makeup wardrobe and while they're gone the crew has the set and it's usually so that's all of our lighting texts and sound and everyone is coming in the camera departments and getting everything.
Marcie Ulin: Set up on top of each other so that then by the time they're finished the actors are ready, the actors come back to set the crew hands the set over and they step off and the actors are on and we're ready to roll.

39
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Meredith Lavender: So suffice it to say there's a lot of cross pollinating that happens in the world of production, you have a lot of people coming and going said, has always been an open and very free moving place you know you're not thinking about.

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Meredith Lavender: How, you have to sub divide people out of is really the only thing that has to happen when the cameras roll, is it needs to be quiet for sound.

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Meredith Lavender: So that's really kind of a one other than that people are often even cameras are often people are moving around on the stage is doing things getting food, you know, whatever and so there's.

42
00:06:24.270 --> 00:06:26.160
Meredith Lavender: figuring out how to go back to work.

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Meredith Lavender: When you know, once the pandemic head and figure out how to create a safe environment we want that much cross pollination happening.

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Meredith Lavender: that many people needing to come and go, it was it wasn't quite the same conundrum as a classroom or people who go into individual offices, I would equate it a little bit more, probably to the experience of trying to put factories or warehouses back.

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Meredith Lavender: into a safe environment because there is so much movement throughout the day.

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00:06:52.320 --> 00:06:59.370
Meredith Lavender: And the thing about a crew is you're all on top of each other when you think you knew probably seen you know the making of a TV show or a movie.

Meredith Lavender: You know if you're the camera operator and you're operating the camera you've got a Dolly grip right behind you who's pushing the Dolly and your focus pillars right in front of you, and you guys are all probably sharing.

Meredith Lavender: And immersed three feet of space, at most, I mean it's a very intimate environment and then after that that you everybody eats lunch together craft service which is.

Meredith Lavender: kind of snacks and drinks throughout the days that our people congregate around that because, again by Union role there has to be those things made available to people so.

Marcie Ulin: yeah so figuring out with the crew back to work, just it was a lot of moving pieces and then.

Marcie Ulin: For what we do, there was the added tricky component of there comes a point in time when the actors, could not be wearing pee pee.

Marcie Ulin: So our crews ended up wearing P P, basically, the whole time but there's a certain stretch time that the actors would hit where they truly had to remove absolutely everything to be able to interact with each other on set to be able to interact with.
Marcie Ulin: hair and.

Marcie Ulin: makeup and for those touch ups and everything else so Hence we had to develop we ended about testing strategy to help us let everybody feel they were going to be safe, so.

Marcie Ulin: Some of the shows that we that we know that we have friends who were working on.

Marcie Ulin: Did the thing where they basically went built like a bubble where they took their entire cast their entire crew they went to one location and they basically.

Marcie Ulin: locked down and treated it like it was summer camp, like the the weather, I know some of the sports leagues built that like here's the section and nobody kind of comes in her out.

Marcie Ulin: But for a lot of other shows that just wasn't possible or practical like for us, we were going back to locations that we'd already had running, we were in New York City like there was a lot of.

Marcie Ulin: There were a lot of other components that we just we did not have the capacity to say we're going to take everybody and just go walk into a place so.

Marcie Ulin: pretty much every studio ended up implementing both a tiered testing plan which i'm a little lab talk about in a minute about how many times a week different.
Marcie Ulin: groups are tested and a pod system that we put into place to kind of end up breaking up as lots of that hundred to 800 people who are going to be there into manageable groups so that we could kind of.

Marcie Ulin: have contacts we could contact tricks with ease if we needed to so we were one of the very first shows that ended up going back in and kind of ended up paving the way with putting these systems all in place so.

Meredith Lavender: that the way we did it was i'll talk about the pod system, first because it's what many places are doing and it's I think relatively self explanatory but it's the idea that each.

Meredith Lavender: Their zones within the structure of the studio space or the location so.

Meredith Lavender: You know, there was we called the red zone, the closest to camera zone, and that was our.

Meredith Lavender: That was our where actors were in the red zone, because very few people are allowed in it, because actors would be without masks etc, etc, so it was only really.

Meredith Lavender: Essential personnel there and then, as you tear it out, you know there's a yellow zone, they were green zones that were a little you know, maybe outside or a little easier to move move around and through so we created zones and then within that we created pause.

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Meredith Lavender: So ordinarily, as I said earlier, you would have like you might have construction working first thing in the morning and you’re rigging grips the would be on set you know.

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Meredith Lavender: hanging lights are doing, are we doing things for the day your lighting crew either your step that crew would be there.

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Meredith Lavender: We had to figure out how to say okay what pod can be in there and then get out and and not be in there for a while and then who’s the next project can go in and which two pods could be there at the same time.

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Meredith Lavender: Such that if there was an issue within that pod we could shut the pod down, we know a lot of schools are doing this, my kids school did the same thing.

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Meredith Lavender: So we figured out the whole system okay here are small, you know departmental groups of people.

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Meredith Lavender: You can shut down that pod contact trace accordingly and keep moving by bringing in kind of.

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Meredith Lavender: Either people that were not affected, who were capable of doing the job and move up for a few days or, in some cases, we had to go outside of our production and find somebody with a skill set and bring them in so.

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Meredith Lavender: That was one way we we kind of set up our contact racing slashing workflow which was you know it’s challenging because it’s not what anyone’s used to.

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Meredith Lavender: And then the second thing we did was essentially went through what he wore what PP was worn by whom and where and why.

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Meredith Lavender: Because our makeup and hair people get the closest to our actors, they were kind of the most fortified.

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Meredith Lavender: And they had guns they had gloves they had masks they had everything everybody, of course, had masks many people chose to wear masks and shields or I were.

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00:11:34.710 --> 00:11:44.340
Meredith Lavender: But we had our we had to really kind of be very conscientious about hair and makeup folks who get so close to the actors mask then we basically put in a.

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Meredith Lavender: System of testing, so the way we did it on our show was three it was three tests, a week we did.

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Meredith Lavender: Everyone had to get tested, who was in inside essentially I think yellow zones Mars, I think it was yellow and red had to get tested three times a week there were two rapid tests and one.

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Meredith Lavender: PCR that's how we handled kind of dividing out trying to catch anything you can catch it always doing a weekly PCR people that were.

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Meredith Lavender: Less on set or could be on set and leave or like our construction crews, we tested them once a week because they had.

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Meredith Lavender: Either time social distancing their workload, there are fewer people outside if it was just the construction crew, so we were able to create an environment like that.

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Meredith Lavender: Within you know each department kind of determine how much you got tested or didn't get tested anecdotally one of the funniest.

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Meredith Lavender: Things it's kind of came up in the processes that, like all PP is not created equal for all jobs and i'm sure, many people are seeing this in different environments.

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Meredith Lavender: And, in our case, for example, if you have a camera man and he can wear a shield that's great but suddenly when that person goes to what we call handheld which is literally picking up the camera and holding the camera as opposed to it being.

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Meredith Lavender: You know, set on $1 or on what we call sticks, meaning that moving and that becomes a problem, because then they need to be able to actually look through.

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Meredith Lavender: into the camera to see what the camera seeing and suddenly that shield doesn't work, nor does.

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Meredith Lavender: protective eyewear so we have a bunch of people like very cool you like figure out and this happened on many productions, not just ours, but they figured out how to like.

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Meredith Lavender: Take ski goggles or swimming goggles and do a one goggles thing with one eye open there's a lot of ingenuity that came out of it, but we had to get really creative because.
Meredith Lavender: Depending on what people needed, we had to kind of adjust accordingly, but at the same time, make sure they were says.

Marcie Ulin: No, and I mean it was you know we were lucky we ended up working we never lost a day shooting we never had to shut down the entire unit.

Marcie Ulin: We only had like 2025 days to get in the can but we've had friends that have truly have had shows up this they've been running for this whole.

Marcie Ulin: long stretch of time that have been in production, for months now.

Marcie Ulin: And the pod system will combine with testing is really, really worked well for the industry, where it's they get if somebody does get a positive they get to contact trace that little pod that little unit gets sent film.

Marcie Ulin: To wait out there quarantine period until they get healthy they bring in a backup crew and so that the Everything can keep running as smoothly as it possibly can.

Marcie Ulin: And you know now we're at this place where with the vaccine rolling out like we're going to see what the policies end up being.

Marcie Ulin: A lot of those are going to be set up the like studio and Union level, like those negotiations are happening and then those mandates are getting passed down to the shows.
Marcie Ulin: So it's going to be interesting to see what they end up what policies end up getting put into place and stick around but.

Marcie Ulin: we're hearing that most studios are leaning towards continuing testing protocols for at least the rest of this year, even with the vaccine rollout I mean that could change at any time but.

Marcie Ulin: You know, given what we're seeing even with things like major league baseball and the Yankees and those kind of things it's like the testing has been a great way to keep everything running smoothly and give everyone peace of mind when they're coming to be able to do their jobs.

Meredith Lavender: yeah for us, especially like the entertainment industry it's a gig economy we're all you know we don't we don't go to work we don't get paid that's that's literally from the highest top after you can think of down to.

Meredith Lavender: The PA on set who's you know first job ever in the business or second or third job ever in the business.

Meredith Lavender: And so, for us, like we were in the position our our crew wanted to go back to work if there was a real push everybody wanted to go back to work, it wasn't.

Meredith Lavender: It wasn't that we didn't feel like the fence or scope of fear, but it was the thing of how do we do this and how do we achieve.

Meredith Lavender: Safety and how do we have an environment where people know that they are safe and are being looked after, because from our CD that was paramount to anything else, of course, we wanted to finish the show.
Meredith Lavender: Of course, we wanted the world to see the show, but at the end of the day we couldn't do it safely, we had you know for us.

Meredith Lavender: You know that wouldn't have worked very well for us let's just say that and, as he said we'll look ahead we'll see what happens.

Meredith Lavender: And with with protocols and how they change, not only for our industry, but for the whole kind of a whole world right and.

Meredith Lavender: But it won't be surprising to us if the studio's do you want to continue testing everything that will become the real question of like, how do you do testing where it doesn't eat up.

Meredith Lavender: kind of the entire.

Meredith Lavender: load in process of the day, because that's one thing I didn't say that when we were looking in in the mornings, and we had.

Meredith Lavender: Rapid testing and the people had to come in and have the test, have had to wait 15 minutes, and that was eating up time in our day.

Meredith Lavender: And then, also because of code, we had to do short and we had to do shorter shooting our thought was just wanted to deal with the Union had made with the studios.
Meredith Lavender: And so, all of a sudden you're using test time to testing and then you're already you've already lost time so you're really having to jam pack your days in a different way, which was.

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Meredith Lavender: Which is hard that's challenging, so I think people will be looking for ways for testing to be easy quick.

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Meredith Lavender: Whether it's at home, is it the split test is there some other kind of rapid test that we just don't know about, yet that people can just.

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Meredith Lavender: Oh look I did it and it's in my APP now and I negative and i'm good you know, so I think that'll be something that the studios will be don't have an eye to until and I towards until things are different universally.

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Gigi Gronvall: You say a little bit more about like the I mean, because when you were when this was being filmed this was at a pretty scary time and and so was you know where people.

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Gigi Gronvall: You know how were they like a scared about the testing was where people reassured, is it like is it normalized how long did that take.

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Marcie Ulin: I mean, I think it was, I think it was a little bit of both I mean will be honest, it was it was, as we all, I mean, I think.

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Marcie Ulin: we've all been living through this right like it was scary and the uncertainties part of what made it scary and I think the testing.
Marcie Ulin: helped everyone feel like they had a backstop you know where you were you were in a you're trusting everyone that you're working with and.

Marcie Ulin: leaning into that kind of space and it, but it gave everybody the the feeling that they knew they were going to be here they knew that.

Marcie Ulin: The people that they were working with that everyone was looking out for each other and had if God forbid somebody came back with a positive.

Marcie Ulin: That there were there were protocols and systems in place to keep it from becoming.

Marcie Ulin: That Community spread and turning into suddenly you know everyone on set got sick or something like that which, of course, when we look back at it you're like the way that it's normally ran.

Marcie Ulin: We would never have been able to go back to work, because for us it was our show we shut down this is every show in the business shut down for like a decent stretch of time over last summer to figure out how are we going to do this in a way.

Marcie Ulin: That allowed people to come back to work, and nothing went back up until you know the fall was the word, the first kind of shows that came back in we all shut down kind of in March and didn't come back up until.

Marcie Ulin: The fall where they've had time to figure out and work through like how are these testing strategies going to work and how are these parts system is going to work.
Meredith Lavender: we're also relying on you know governors being willing to open up states to certain numbers of people gathering, because obviously you've heard us talking about Oh, we have.

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Meredith Lavender: You know 150 people inside and York rolled it out a little bit and in waves, like our very first day of filming we were allowed that I think kind of hundred people on set so we had to go with a really slim down crew.

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Meredith Lavender: And then we were allowed Funnily enough, as we start on August 31 then September 1 we were allowed to go up, I think, to like 150 or 200 and then at some point, it became.

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Meredith Lavender: You know the numbers didn't matter if you have protocols in place.

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Meredith Lavender: The way we were able to kind of do things that was that we had actually machines that are ours dedicated to us in a dedicated space on our stages, so we were able to run our own testing kind of Protocol like in house essentially.

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Meredith Lavender: Which is the don't know that it would have been possible to do it any other way, because I just, we have to be we had to have total control of that situation in order to accomplish losing hours and hours and hours and days and days.

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Gigi Gronvall: Did you do symptom screening as well, or just the testing.

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Meredith Lavender: I yeah we did send them screening for sure I think at tested, I think it ever was asked the questions you know and everyone was baffling also just coming back in August everyone was highly aware of that kind of symptoms, so I think that um if anything happened I think anyone saw somebody.
Marcie Ulin: And they were doing, we were getting like temperature screenings when people showed up and that kind of thing that you weren’t sure the questions of you know i’ve been.

Marcie Ulin: asymptomatic mid systemic it's really fun it's essentially we're doing with our kids going back to school now.

Marcie Ulin: it's the same kind of yeah daily check to be like, yes, this temperature check and then also knowing that there was the top of 123 tests, a week again depending on which zone, you were in.

Gigi Gronvall: Do you think it's going to influence the way that scripts are written and to kind of accommodate the smaller.

Meredith Lavender: for the foreseeable future until until until things are more normal or you know you don't have to follow a strict protocol 100% and and you're seeing it.

Meredith Lavender: For those of you out there who watch, you know, for example, CDs shows their actors are wearing masks the season and that's on some of the more like legal procedural stuff or things where.

Meredith Lavender: it's okay to be part of the story, because it's you know its operating in the world, as if it's today those kinds of stories it's a little harder with something like the flight attendant.

Meredith Lavender: And Kathy in the basket and character, but I do think you're going to see.
Meredith Lavender: it'll be interesting to watch, I think, looking back when you look at TV over these kind of two years to see scenes that suddenly could have been one version of the scene that are much smaller with fewer extra is we did have.

Meredith Lavender: One of the things we had to do was decided kind of what was the most number of extras we needed and we actually had a pool of investors that we kept.

Meredith Lavender: On hand for the whole 30 days and we just moved them around, and you know if you lose your face today it's your back tomorrow or whatever he had to.

Meredith Lavender: Normally, you would have different extras every day and we couldn't do that, obviously, we needed to have a pool of folks we could kind of keep the same time that we were keeping on our crew in our in our actors so.

Marcie Ulin: You know we've had a lot of friends who have worked on.

Marcie Ulin: shows different different shows than ours, but that are a little bit more effects heavy and that kind of stuff and they've said they're leaning a lot more on their effects, a lot more on their.

Marcie Ulin: replacements of backgrounds and building crowds and tiling like we used to do this, a lot when we run nashville run like when we were shooting.

Marcie Ulin: concert scenes and stuff where it would be like the first hundred people, you were seeing were real and then you would start to build out with computer models and stuff, and that is becoming.
Marcie Ulin: A lot more widespread for anybody who's having to do any kind of crowd work, then that sort of stuff and the way that those programs have evolved over the last decade is amazing yeah.

Gigi Gronvall: That goes for lots of shooting on location as well right.

Meredith Lavender: So we lost a couple of our locations understandably.

Meredith Lavender: And they were established location so either had to.

Meredith Lavender: Build something on our set that could replicate it enough to get away with it, we had to change the location of that particular story piece, which in some cases even some cases it's hard.

Meredith Lavender: But in locations, we have we would run into, for example, there's a big scene in episode eight that we shot at the jarvis Center we shot it as a.

Meredith Lavender: As an airport, actually, but even in the space as massive as the Atrium at the jarvis Center you know, we had a limited number of extras we are allowed to have at any given point in time, so you know yeah and, like in.

Meredith Lavender: places that didn't want us to come back you know it's again totally understand, but it yeah it was hard for us, but we got it we're just alive.
Meredith Lavender: But you know look you just you tack accordingly, and you, I mean part of part of producing anything and movies TV music video editing part of it is.

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Meredith Lavender: Just being nimble it's being your job is literally just all problems that's marcy and my job by trade, other than writing words we then.

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Meredith Lavender: Once the words are written we solve problems and that's what you spend your day doing and and as a creative storyteller you you look at any given scene and you say okay what's the essence of the scene.

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Meredith Lavender: Okay, if I can't do it on a boat because it's raining and it's not safe for the crew, can I get the same thing convey that we're like standing in a boat house, yes, I can okay great that's an easy change so it's the benefit of having.

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Meredith Lavender: creatives involved in producing and Problem Solving and we were able to you know to tack accordingly, but I think locations, will be a challenge, continue to be a challenge going forward.

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Meredith Lavender: Until people are more comfortable and people feel that the vaccines are you know, doing everything that they have been doing and that they're working in that you know we're seeing where we all curtail of of the of the disease of the virus so.

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Marcie Ulin: yeah I mean we also you know we we have worked on many, many shows where we travel.

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Marcie Ulin: A lot and in a traditional way when you're shooting a TV show a lot of times what happens is your directors only coming in, for that one episode.
Marcie Ulin: Your writers, are only coming in, for that episode, you have actors who are coming in, for a day or five days or that kind of thing, and that was that has been very challenging to try to figure out how to work around those.

Marcie Ulin: those sorts of limitations, because there's not the same.

Marcie Ulin: in and out, you know, like even when we first did this back up, it was that place of like people were quarantining in New York for two weeks before they could even go beyond set and join the pods and stuff if you're coming from outside of New York state and so that's that's going to.

Meredith Lavender: Change just going through that right now all of our friends were in Canada, the same issue, right now, because canada's quarantines are incredibly.

Meredith Lavender: Their rules are really stringent right now it's a three days before you land test test to the airport, you have to go to a governance section of hotel until you get your second negative and then it's still 14 days total.

Meredith Lavender: In quarantine wherever even quarantine safely and so that affects production to right and my mother in law just went through it, she had been here, and she went back to Canada where she's from but.

Meredith Lavender: And same thing with production and the actor who's going to Canada right now has to have to do that so then production has to take on the cost of that the the time structure of that, and what that does, and when you're asking somebody to come in and it gets a little trickier.
Meredith Lavender: You know so unless it's a big role is like, in most cases, now stuff you might have flown in American actor off you're casting a Canadian local which doesn't happen it's good for Canadian local talent.

Gigi Gronvall: Yes, it is that does that affect like.

Gigi Gronvall: um you know the kind of the lifestyle of you know where people might go with their families for for the whole production or you know, does it sometimes doesn't this take months.

Marcie Ulin: yeah a lot of times, it does and again we've had friends who have contemplated taking jobs outside of the US, but they've realized that.

Marcie Ulin: There there's an openness to visas for certain workers, but not the extended.

Marcie Ulin: tourist visa that like your family used to get so people who are like oh I don't want to necessarily take a job i'm gonna be gone for.

Marcie Ulin: A year that i'm in a way that out, do I go and leave my family for a year do it or do I not take the job and that's definitely been I think something that a lot of people are.

Marcie Ulin: are weighing as they try to contemplate that, but the so the notion of do you just pick up your whole family and.

Marcie Ulin: Go and you're going to go live someplace else for a long extended period of time because it's not it's easy to bounce back and forth to be like i'm going to be on set for
Monday through Thursday and I'm gonna go home for the weekends and it's a it's a big shift hmm.

Gigi Gronvall: Did you have any problems like with false positives during the time that you were shooting.

Marcie Ulin: We can read.

Meredith Lavender: Because the way we are protocol was a positive was a positive positive we got lucky in that nobody got stuck on our show.

Meredith Lavender: But we had a times folks had to go home.

Meredith Lavender: And then we'll follow up subsequent testing, it was proven to have been a false positive but we just we had the studio's had to make it the other unions had to make a decision, and I think it was the right decision at the time.

Meredith Lavender: Especially with with still we're back in vaccines were still a question America wasn't going to be late 19 or 20 we just didn't know, and so I think the answer, or like 20 sees me and know what year it is anymore i've lost my nine.

Meredith Lavender: Where they are in space anyone.

Meredith Lavender: know what the point being that we that wasn't rolling out, it was still a question when it was going to roll out, you know if it was like 20 or 21, and so we just had to have a hard line and approach it that way, so the answer was.
Meredith Lavender: going to be testing back, and it was positive, you went home, and that was this one, it was.

Gigi Gronvall: Good it ended up that you had like more people involved or less people like when you had to have extra crew members didn't end up being you know about the same number or how did that change, like the actual numbers of people that you've had.

Meredith Lavender: A couple things that I didn't have her one we definitely had a few extra people, because each show has a coven officer wow so it's actually somebody.

Meredith Lavender: Usually somebody from the medical field who comes on to the show to oversee the whole process of everything to do with coven and also then that person is.

Meredith Lavender: Making sure that protocols being followed whether testing or people hear anything out or distancing or anything else.

Meredith Lavender: We definitely in some cases had fewer people, because if again if we are going into a location, we normally would have been able to walk in with like.

Meredith Lavender: 150 people in that location, so that you can only have 100 people, but we can't say I wouldn't have to be extra as if we need all the extra, so in that case you might have like a slim down camera crew or slim down.

Meredith Lavender: grip or electric crew, you know depends on I wouldn't say it was for our show, in particular, I wouldn't say it was an overwhelming swing and one way or the other, I know some other shows probably.
Meredith Lavender: More so than baseline down as much as they try just to get back in.

Meredith Lavender: Because, especially shows like LA had different rules than New York had
different rules from Atlanta had different roles from Chicago so you've had to had to just
roll with it wherever you were so, but our show in particular didn't feel like it
impacted us that much.

Gigi Gronvall: um there's a question about like the cadence of the testing and like how that
was negotiated and whether that is there going to be sort of an industry best practice on
that, like.

Gigi Gronvall: You know, you mentioned that it was dictated by Union requirements that
you did testing three times a week is that do you see that changing or and also who paid
for the test, I know that in some
locations, it was probably free but picked up by the state.

Gigi Gronvall: Or was it picked up.

Meredith Lavender: Everything for for us.

Meredith Lavender: They now the show is paid for everything which has been in the studio
thanks for everything.

Meredith Lavender: This is a bike so the studio's pay for it um I had a that's a good question
about the cadence I wonder, Maurice i'm gonna say this is a question and curious your
thoughts I wonder, with the vaccine if that might change.
Meredith Lavender: And this is me truly wondering, maybe a changes protocol, maybe once a week becomes the standard maybe the you know I don't know I think that's going to be a kind of wait and see.

Meredith Lavender: Because it's also the question I you know I don't think unions or studios necessarily will make vaccines mandatory and that I have no, I have no finger on the pulse on that other than to say I just don't know that that's what will happen.

Meredith Lavender: So if that doesn't happen, I think the testing in place in some capacity don't you agree.

Marcie Ulin: yeah I think so because I think that it's and again, as we all know, there's so many ripple effects that go with that and what the policies are, but I think it's going to be, it will be negotiated between the studios and the unions is my knee jerk on that.

Marcie Ulin: To make sure that everybody feels like they are protected and covered and then that will be kind of the policy that rolls forward but it's going to live at that level not really on like an individual show.

Meredith Lavender: Think, if I had if you made me in this moment paper, I would say it would never be it would not be less than one and I don't expect it to go to more than three reasons that kind of became the industry that did kind of become the standard.

Meredith Lavender: But again about what is that that's again union bosses and studio heads and heads of production, good luck.
Gigi Gronvall: But you had you didn't really have i'm trying to think about if there were any children on the set but I mean certainly there's going to be shows that have that have kids that can't you know can't even be vaccine get.

Meredith Lavender: Right, we have, we have two kids on our side.

Gigi Gronvall: And oh yeah yeah that's right.

Meredith Lavender: The same thing.

Meredith Lavender: Every time they had to test the same as everybody else.

Marcie Ulin: But to your point about the vaccine jujitsu exactly it's like there are people who can't get vaccinated for for whatever reasons are people who are you know with an age requirements and, like all of those things so.

Marcie Ulin: You know, like we said, our understanding right now is that for most a lot of students are saying to basically like they're just going to continue these for the foreseeable future right like this is how they're going to be handling this yeah.

Gigi Gronvall: So somebody asks how did you handle clear and i'm not sure what.
Meredith Lavender: I don't think we have anything, as I know, it is only because my husband's.

Gigi Gronvall: Clinical Okay, I was thinking it was something that was an acronym from your world and not but yes, I do know what clears.

Meredith Lavender: The lab accreditation.

Meredith Lavender: case I think it's because we were working with a testing company, and then we had a registered nurse on site doing.

Meredith Lavender: All of the actual testing whatever so we were in conjunction with a come with a testing company or with a it was a testing company, and then the natural when we had medical professionals and and all of that so right we didn't have to have an actual proper.

Meredith Lavender: We didn't have to set up a lab the goodness my husband has set up to those and why we didn't have to.

Meredith Lavender: gather, who has done that.

Gigi Gronvall: Now, now the clear waiver is isn't an important part of this process.

Gigi Gronvall: For some.
Gigi Gronvall: Did you collect statistics or is anybody collecting statistics about any of you know, our studios looking like pan what you know what has worked and what doesn't and if there's any best practices that are emerging.

Meredith Lavender: If they are, they haven't told us.

Marcie Ulin: Right.

Meredith Lavender: If there was you know, interestingly, if there was a great public health reason to collect that information somebody should raise their hand and talk to Hollywood but.

Meredith Lavender: You know that that functions above our heads, from where we sit on shows.

Gigi Gronvall: huh do you think people will want to have some sort of card that identifies you know that that their vaccines What do people talk about like the vaccine issue like i'm ready to work i've been vaccinated um.

Meredith Lavender: I don't think that's a good question I don't know the answer to that I don't I think you know people if social media is any indication, it feels like most people are pretty psyched and letting the world know they've been vaccinated so.

Meredith Lavender: I think if it's about coming back to work, then, again I don't think anyone I don't know that they'll be able to make that mandatory between you know, unions and CEOs and.
Meredith Lavender: My abilities and rules and people's rights and hipaa and all that i'm not sure about to handle that because I think that's where it becomes actually an interesting.

Gigi Gronvall: Did did there was ever a problem before coven that you could think of where like you know productions had problems because of illness i'm wondering.

Gigi Gronvall: You know, is this is there going to be some expectation like this is a variable that maybe we can control like to keep flew off the set or is that something or people are just not there yet.

Marcie Ulin: I mean I don't I can't think of anything that falls in this category.

Meredith Lavender: I hope people will be I hope people.

Meredith Lavender: As somebody who often starts off every writers room by telling people if they feel crappy to stay home.

Meredith Lavender: Because not let's not have like the universal cold the fires around the writers room and my hope is that we've all learned a little bit about.

Meredith Lavender: That and that we you know people listen to their bodies, a little bit more, and that also work environments, create a slightly better situation for people to be allowed to be set, you know, because it does happen.
Meredith Lavender: So yeah but I don't I can't think of anything either offhand okay.

Gigi Gronvall: What was the was there did it take like what were some of the most fun experiences, then you had to like do people were people.

Gigi Gronvall: feeling like they weren't didn't get the full experience of this of the show or anything, because there is that, like separation of pods or did it, you know did it just come, you know did it work out.

Meredith Lavender: People were just really happy to be worked, I mean like I said, these are people who don't work and have to pay, and I think people were really you know yeah I wasn't I We talked to our friends recruiter and it was you know.

Meredith Lavender: it's weird and you know you don't just sit around you know it's not the kind of.

Meredith Lavender: laid back, not the right word, but just kind of free flowing creative jam that production can be, and that was definitely weird, but I think people were just so happy to be back at, especially for us, so we shut down we shot.

Meredith Lavender: We shot all five episodes in today's episode six of an eight episode series, you know so for all of us like we just we all wanted to get the show done was we.

Meredith Lavender: thought we had something really special that we were working on and we thought the world is going to be hope, the world is going to love it.
Meredith Lavender: And so we I think everybody in our particular case everybody was just really excited to go back to work and and finish this thing and see it through, so I don't think anyone was too concerned at that point about is it fun or not fun.

Meredith Lavender: Our friends, I have a friend who has a show up in Atlanta right now, and she.

Meredith Lavender: She said, you know people just want they're rolling with it everyone's rolling with it, and like.

Marcie Ulin: I mean they had, I believe that what they did was they had all of the meals became individually wrapped and package so there wasn't the like.

Marcie Ulin: cafeteria line style flow and everyone was socially distanced and they were eating in waves, as opposed to it being like the whole company breaks and goes to lunch for.

Marcie Ulin: An hour together and it's like lunch hour in high school today we all get to hang out together and have a good time it was much more like.
Marcie Ulin: It went in definite waves in pockets and they had you know, sometimes people were eating outside and sometimes you know they were inside and you know very, very large spaces, where people were still staying socially distance.

Marcie Ulin: When they were eating anytime they had to remove their PP.

Meredith Lavender: same across services, all that became normally services is kind of looks like.

Meredith Lavender: I don't know you want, you know there's snacks out there might be some fresh fruit cut up and I became all individually wrapped and packaged stuff and then anytime.

Meredith Lavender: They could be weather permitting they could be outside like they were outside anytime we could do anything you know where we weren't in an enclosed space we took advantage of that.

Gigi Gronvall: Can you talk a little bit about like the beginning, like what so when production was shut down and March, and you know and how you kind of got to the testing strategy that you had.

Meredith Lavender: yeah so we.

Meredith Lavender: There were a lot of paul's a lot of calls that even we weren't on again, because this is happening at the high level.
Meredith Lavender: And because the unions had to agree to it and, in our case and and then a lot of unions, where you have writers Guild screen actors Guild the oxy which is your below the line crew.

Meredith Lavender: directors Guild Am I missing producers Guild and there's you know, there was a lot, there are a lot of talks happening, as you can imagine, incredibly incredibly high level.

Meredith Lavender: So what we did, and we were lucky we were able to put all of our editors at home and get them edit bays setup at home, and so we were able to do edit essentially through zoom which was wild and crazy but it worked.

Meredith Lavender: And so we weren't we weren't a while they were kind of solving it by higher level, because you know we were one of how many TV shows out there and that had to figure out a way to go back and so.

Meredith Lavender: That quest was really on them and then our show, in particular, we were allowed to that we got each studio was allowed to pick a single show to kind of put ahead of the big Union deal that was going to happen and as our show and in the case of Warner horizon, and so we.

Meredith Lavender: We kind of had to hit pedal to the metal on that, and so we had a lot of calls about testing and how is going to work that felt largely on our line producer and our unit production manager they're kind of the physical production people.

Meredith Lavender: within an actual production and so that really fell to them kind of figure out how to make it all work, and so they spent a great deal of time from probably late April until we were back in they spent a great deal of time lots.
Meredith Lavender: And lots of doctors and lots of scientists and people waiting in.

Gigi Gronvall: mercy, do you have any.

Marcie Ulin: yeah I mean that was.

Marcie Ulin: That was kind of the way that we actually ended up evolving it, you know just wanted to try to.

Marcie Ulin: Put the most parameters in place where we could clearly turn the lights back on but also everyone could feel that they were covered, you know that they that they were not walking into a scary you know hit that we were managing the situation.

Marcie Ulin: And, and that everyone felt like they were they were being taken care of.

Gigi Gronvall: Do you have any advice for why I have a question before asking me like a broader one, but I mean so different studios put forth one show.

Gigi Gronvall: What What about like you know less less resourced productions yeah how how did you know that, like test how would a testing work or did they were they just unable to continue.

Meredith Lavender: Anyone that I said everything right.
Marcie Ulin: yeah I don't know top I had, I mean, I know, like I said there were some productions and I definitely know some like smaller indie type things that they really did that they built a bubble.

Marcie Ulin: And that was how they handled it they had their crew they had their cast the other writers their directors or producers and they basically.

Marcie Ulin: tested went into the bubble, and I have I don't know if they ended up continuing doing you know.

Marcie Ulin: Testing as they went or not, but they basically locked themselves down and said, you know for 10 days or 12 days or 25 days or however many days they were going to be shooting nobody was going in or out and they were treating it like one little.

Marcie Ulin: One little shut down household unit basically was the work unit and they weren't going and visiting their families, they weren't going back and forth and just not cross pollinating and that was how I like I know have a couple friends who did indie films that way.

Marcie Ulin: During during the pandemic and stuff but.

Gigi Gronvall: So kind of an overarching question like what kind of advice would you give you know and what kind of advice would you give to others as they're thinking of like how to prepare in the future for for.

Gigi Gronvall: another outbreak and what do you think is like some of the biggest lessons that you know you really wish that.
Gigi Gronvall: That you know, we want to make sure we preserve so that we don't you know forget how you know we can we can get back to work a little bit more quickly.

Meredith Lavender: Do you wanna.

Gigi Gronvall: be on a small level or you know big will level.

um.

Marcie Ulin: I mean i'm tired it's kind of like I think that this was a.

Marcie Ulin: It definitely felt once in a generation.

Marcie Ulin: We type thing that's how and i'm hopefully knock wood um where everyone.

Marcie Ulin: came together and it feels like we've done our best to figure out the best way through this very, very challenging time for everyone, and now we are really.

Marcie Ulin: Hoping that we're turning the corner I needed to turn the corner and I mean I guess the spaces, if it God forbid happens again that we all now have some policies in place and hopefully we'll be able to step into that even faster and.
Marcie Ulin: put those guys put those guardrails up if we need to stop them back into place again it felt very much like the this time when it all started everyone was.

Marcie Ulin: Completely flat footed in that place of it never happened before what was this you know, and I mean that was clearly across the across the globe and I feel like.

Marcie Ulin: Hopefully, what we what we gain out of that is now we feel like we have some policies that have worked and it worked well and guidelines and guardrails so that we can clip them back, and if we need to.

Meredith Lavender: I think, for me, my takeaways are a little bit marcy and I are production friendly writers and producers, not everybody is we are.

Meredith Lavender: I think we were already pretty nimble this taught us to be a lot more nimble and I think that that is a takeaway that I hope.

Meredith Lavender: Every production will take with them of you know, when when the thing that comes out of left field comes out of left field, and you just figure out how to.

Meredith Lavender: mitigate through it as quickly as possible, and now that and I do think there are some lessons learned this of like okay stop.

Meredith Lavender: Get everybody on the same page if we need a smaller career we do a smaller crew if we need to change location, we can change the location, there are ways to do this, you know and and make it happen, so I think.
Meredith Lavender: You know, there are some practices in Hollywood that have existed for your forever and and the answer was always like well that's just because that's how you know how it's always been done.

Meredith Lavender: And I think that now there's there's a way to challenge, some of those practices and not in a take on the machine way, but just like no like look look.

Meredith Lavender: I think you'll hear people say you know, during coven we did this thing and it saved us like six hours on a day and I do think some of those practices will carry forward.

Meredith Lavender: I certainly hope so, and then I do think also I the thing I said before, I really hope this has everybody, you know looking out for.

Meredith Lavender: people's health in a slightly different way than then we certainly have in the past, and you know that's that's from.

Meredith Lavender: Whoever onset all the way up to the top and down to the bottom, so you know that you're.

Meredith Lavender: A little more aware, even as an individual that you're more aware if i'm feeling a little funky like yeah you know what now it's so weird to put on a mask.

Meredith Lavender: You know, many countries have done that, for a long time, and I think there are lessons to be learned from that as well, so we'll see we'll see if if.

Meredith Lavender: We all choose to do that or not.
Gigi Gronvall: It's been such a pleasure to hear your stories of the and I'm really so excited to.

Gigi Gronvall: That I had to prepare for this that I had to actually watch your show, so it was really such a great experience and thank you for all the joy that you bring and it really.

Gigi Gronvall: has been so informative and we are so grateful that you took time out of your very busy schedules to talk with us about testing.

Meredith Lavender: And the.

Meredith Lavender: fact that all of you who have been other people solving these problems for the last you know 15 months like.

Meredith Lavender: Hats off to you, because if you all didn't do what you do for a living, we there's no chance we would have been back in production so we're very, very grateful to to all of the science folks and and medical folks out there who just figured it out.

Gigi Gronvall: Thank you so much, everyone and well, that concludes our webinar for today and we'll we'll put everything on our website so you can review the recording and we'll make sure that we send it to people who weren't able to join us.

Gigi Gronvall: Sorry, if we didn't get to your question, but, but hopefully we'll answer it in some other ways another time Thank you everyone, and thank you especially Meredith and Marcy.
Gigi Gronvall: Take care of everybody.

Meredith Lavender: Take care.