

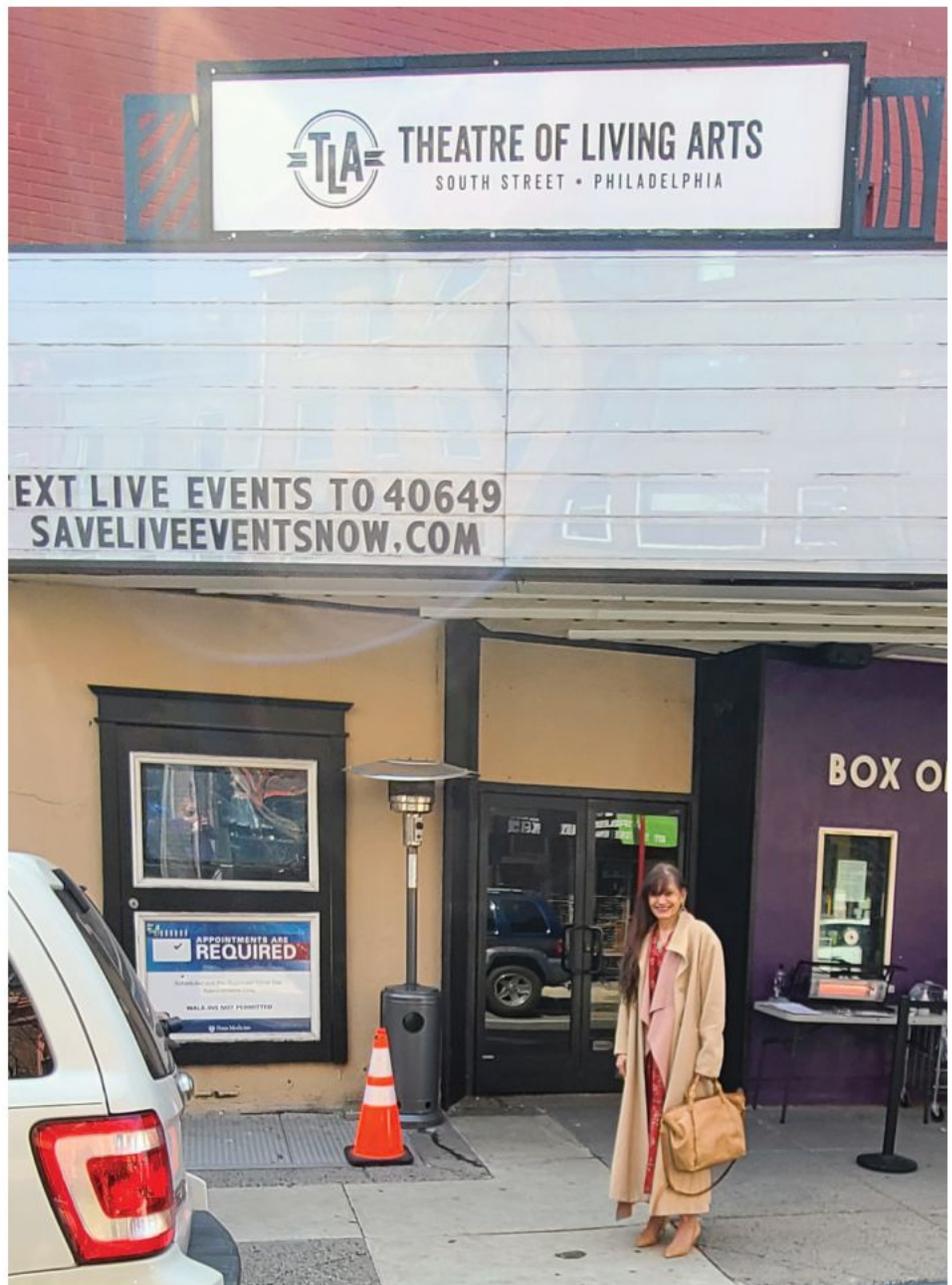
# Time Travel

BY SHELLI FEDULLO

**A**ccording to Albert Einstein's theory of special relativity, time is an illusion; it is relative and can vary for different observers depending on their speed through space. I do not pretend, even for a second, to have the intellectual firepower to scratch the surface of understanding what that actually means. "Einstein for Dummies" only served to force me to embrace the true depths of my dummy-hood. Still, the notion that time is not a linear constant has always captured my imagination; as a kid, if I could have picked a superpower, it would have been time-travel.

Certainly, our perception of time is relative—think about the interminable experience of that four-hour deposition versus the breakneck speed of that 48-hour weekend. When we were children, wasn't the space between any 12-month point in time an eternity? One birthday was an unfathomable distance from the next, until all of a sudden it wasn't—we became grown-ups. Then, we became lawyers, and many, even most, of us became accustomed to measuring out our days in six-minute increments. We juggle deadlines. We blink our eyes, and that distant deadline is here. We need more time, and then we still need more.

Why all the musings about time? They were triggered by my visit to TLA on South Street to get my first COVID-19 vaccination shot a few weeks ago. When I received the appointment con-



firmation, I thought the address must be wrong—I'm getting vaccinated at TLA? As it turns out, TLA is serving as a community vaccination site. Depending on your age, you may remember its different incarnations, including being a concert venue at one point and a movie theater at another. I have passed it umpteen times, but I was last inside in 1968, when I knew it as "Theatre of the Living Arts," home to a repertory company. I was there to see a production of Luigi Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author," a play in the absurdist genre, which as we said back then, "blew my mind." A few years later, this inspired me to earnestly write a very derivative play for a college class. I can report that my play succeeded at absurdity, but unfortunately not in the way I had intended.

Although TLA looked very different than it did in 1968, I took a few pictures with my phone. I was not really sure why. I was excited to be there, but it was more than just the relief of getting vaccinated. There was something else, some strong connection. As I thought about it during my walk home, the time span between the 16-year-old me who was completely captivated by a play and the 68-year-old me who was completely captivated by getting a COVID-19 vaccination suddenly did not feel linear at all. It felt pretty fluid. I expected to look down and see the hearts I had embroidered all over the legs of my bell-bottom jeans, frayed because they were too long and got caught under my clogs. I listened for the tiny bells crocheted onto the huge shoulder bag with floor length fringe that my mother had made for me. Had I finally managed to become a time-traveler? Was this a rare side effect of the vaccine? Should I call the FDA?

I can't really explain why my visit to TLA sent me on a journey to 1968, but it ended abruptly when I decided to stop at the market on the way home. After three blocks of schlepping groceries, I entered the house pretty winded, dropped the bags on the floor, and semi-collapsed onto a sofa to rest. There was no denying

that even if time is an illusion, its effects are real. Although after a few minutes I felt revived enough to get up to unpack the bags, I decided instead to give myself permission to sit awhile and unpack the experience. The frozen food could wait. So could the time-entries that I needed to post.

While it may not be time-travel, in purposefully revisiting and observing our experiences from later vantage points filtered by what we have learned and unlearned throughout the collective moments of our lives, we are on a timeless and essential journey. Introspection and retrospection may seem like extravagances when we feel rocketed at light speed by the demands of our lives. Still, every now and then, we need to give ourselves permission to let the timesheets slide, or put aside whatever else we are supposed to be doing, to reflect, to rethink, to reexamine, and to become immersed in time in a different way. ■

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