[Season 3 Episode 1]

**In Service to the Writers in the Room: The London Writers’ Salon Founders Parul Bavishi and Matt Trinetti**

**Matt Trinetti:** We are deeply in service to the Writers in the Room. And I think that's where we build everything from—how can we serve people? How can we make this better? How can we make people feel a greater sense of belonging? How can we help them where they're feeling stuck?

**Parul Bavishi:** I think we're both at the same place. It's just like, how can we be happy? How can we find joy in what we do and enable others to find joy in what they do?

**Lisa Dickson:** You're listening to W.Y.R.D. the Wyrd House radio. I'm Lisa Dickson and this is Wyrd Words: Conversations About Literature and Learning in Higher Education. My guests today are Parul Bavishi and Matt Trinetti.

Parul Bavishi is an editor and a literary scout, a coach, a mentor, a story doctor for thriller, young adult and nonfiction writers, and a contributor and editor for *The Story Grid* where she also hosts the *Showrunners Podcast*. She joins us today from London.

Matt Trinetti is a writer, publisher, TEDx speaker, and professional development facilitator. His writing appears in lots of places, including for example, *The Huffington Post*, and, in his blog *GiveLiveExplore*, he writes about work, life and travel. He's beaming in to us from Dorset in the UK.

Together, Parul and Matt are the Ma and Pa of the London Writers’ Salon and the transformative global online writers’ sprint community Writers’ Hour. Thank you for taking time out of your day with 900 people who wait for you in the zoom rooms to talk to Wyrd Words today!

**Matt Trinetti:** Yeah, thanks so much for having us.

**Lisa Dickson:** Before we get started, I have the privilege of being the host, so I get to do my little love letter at the beginning and then if it gets mushy and terrible, we can cut it out. I joined the Writers’ Hour in, I think, the end of June. A friend called me and said, “you should really come and do this,” and I've been (as much as possible) once or twice a day since that time. I was reading the hashtag today for Writer's Hour on Twitter, which is where I live, and I'm just going to read you a couple of tweets and then you can tell me what Writers’ Hour is to you, but I’m going to tell you what Writers’ Hour is to other people.

For example, this person says: “since discovering Writers’ Hour, I've seen an enormous difference in productivity. I'm up to writing with you three hours a day and more around the edges and still getting my work done. Before, it was all, a bit, one or the other, constantly guilty about the other, but no more.”

This one: “feeling profoundly grateful to Writers’ Salon at the moment. Writers’ Hour has literally changed my writing world. Thank you for inviting me to share with you guys what I'm working on. I always hated the solitude of writing alone.”

“The amount of time that I spend with Writers’ Salon and the writers, our crew, this is shaping up to be the most committed and lasting relationship I've had so far.”

That's just a few and those comments go on and on and on. It clearly is making a profound difference in the lives of people all over the place. So, could I ask you to just explain what the Writers’ Salon is, and what the Writers’ Hour is, just to kind of scope out the space, and then I'll start to dig into your souls a little bit after that.

**Parul Bavishi:** I love that you're going to dig into our souls later on and actually funnily enough, talking about what Writers’ Hour means to people is interesting to hear and it's beautiful. It makes us... you've probably seen us laughing… it's wonderful, beautiful that people feel this way. Today someone told us that they feel like they're having an affair with us against the rest of their life, and I asked them if they'd consider making it a serious relationship and declaring to everyone that they’re part of our tribe.

So, London Writers’ Salon is something that Matt and I dreamed up quite a few years ago now and it was always intended to be a space for all writers. We started with in-person events and the idea was that we would help unveil some of the mystery and myths and, I suppose, some of the common problems that writers face across all mediums.

And Writers’ Hour has been something that was set up and accelerated during COVID. It was an hour of peace, an hour of community, an hour of writing alone but together because the world was going in a weird direction. And the only certainty we had was that, well, we had each other, and we could write for an hour. And why don't we invite our friends? It's continued to be that. It's a place where you can come and write in silence, now four times a day—we chase 8 AMs across the world: 8 AM London, 8 AM New York, 8 AM Pacific and 8 AM Wellington (NZ). And we write.

**Matt Trinetti:** I think, Parul, you covered it. I mean, for anyone who's listening and wants a peek into what it actually looks like, it's a zoom room, we show up at the hour, everyone comes in (usually there's raucous voices as people wish each other good morning) we invite everyone in, we share our intentions for the hour in the chat, everyone says what they're working on if they have a kind of goal, “I'm working on my blog, I'm working on my book, I'm working on my script, I'm editing,” whatever it is. We read a quote about writing, we raise a glass, we cheers each other, and then we go on mute for 50 minutes.

And a lot of people… I love hearing you Lisa reading those, it's so wonderful to hear what it means to people. I think it's one of the joys of doing this is just to know how much it's helping people. It's so simple, but it's so effective. 50 minutes of silent writing permission to do the work alongside other people. That's what it is. And then we check out at the end and see how the writing went and then we do it again and again, and again, four times a day. And we've been going for over a year and a half.

**Lisa Dickson:** Wow. Yeah, it's kind of interesting to me and because… like butterflies and bumblebees, it's something that when you look at it shouldn't work, right? This is the thing that I find so beautiful about it because we all have zoom fatigue, who wants to sign in for zoom again? But I can't miss it! And I know lots of people can't miss it.

In fact, I teach half online and half in person, and my online hour each week is basically Writers' Hour. We follow the exact same pattern and my students keep coming and they love it. Could we talk just a little bit more about this idea of working alone together? Could we unpack that a little bit? What do you think is the special alchemy that's going on in that space?

**Matt Trinetti:** Two things come to mind for me, and this is someone who… I would love to just go into coffee shops and just do work there. Even if I don't speak to anyone that entire time, if I'm there for an hour or 2, 3, 4, or 5 hours, whatever it is, just the energy of people sitting down at their computers, at their notebooks, reading, working, there's some sort of energy there. So, I think that's part of it. It's just kind of the coffee shop feel of knowing you're doing work, there's a kind of buzz around you, there's other people working and so are you. I think that's part of it.

I think the other thing, and this is… I guess Parul and I, we were inspired too about these “ship it hours” or “ship it sessions,” or basically focussed power hours where you just gather together, you set an intention and you do work with intention… there's some sort of magic there.

It's a combination, I think, of the buzz of a coffee shop, working beside people, plus the intentionality of “this is what I'm doing over this hour, enough with my procrastination, enough with putting it off, I'm just going to do it for an hour.” And it's remarkable. So I think it's tapping into a couple of those things.

**Parul Bavishi:** I love the analogy of going into a coffee shop, but then what if the barista knew your name and every time you came in, they said “hey, Matt, good to see you! What are you working on today? How have you been?” And I think we've joked about this in the past, quite early on in London Writers’ Salon, we talked about *Cheers*, the bar *Cheers* and the TV show. What if everyone knew your name? What if sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name and they're glad you came?

Well, that's sort of what Writers’ Hour is; it’s always supposed to be that. And in person, we used to do that when we held events, Matt and I would make a point of going around every single person who came into our event and would shake their hand or put a hand on their back and say, “welcome, it's good to have you here.”

**Lisa Dickson:** Yeah, I love that idea of being a welcoming space. And, and here's another tweet: “In Writers’ Hour I just noodled around for 50 blissful minutes of zero expectations except being there for 50 minutes and something really lovely came out. Which reminds me, sometimes just having someone 8,000 kilometers away who will show up every day and open the door can save you a little bit,” which I think is important too, that idea of having a place to go where you know that nobody is going to interrupt you, or maybe they will but they're not going to ask anything of you in that space other than just be there for 50 minutes.

And, you know, just going somewhere where you know that the door is going to be open when you get there, I think is really, really valuable for folks who are feeling quite isolated and pretty beat up, I think, over the last 18-20 months. I love that idea of a bar where everybody knows your name, or a coffee shop where you can meet people. Yeah.

**Matt Trinetti:** That's an interesting point too, because I think this is some of the feedback we heard in the early days. We opened it, it was March 23rd, 2020. The UK had just announced lockdown and we kept a room open, and we kept opening it. When so much was uncertain in the world, to know that you had the stability that someone would open that door and familiar faces would be there to greet you, I think, for so many people, it was like the one thing that they had to look forward to, that they had to latch onto. Yeah.

**Parul Bavishi:** And some of the best advice I've ever been given about… when in chaos and when in uncertainty, you find the one thing that's certain for you. And in the beginning of lockdown, around the time we opened up, my entire family had COVID. I was pretty scared. I was actually really, really scared and I didn't have much that was certain, but I had the Hour and I knew that I would write. It's something so little, but these certainties, if you add them up, I think they can help us find structure in our day.

**Matt Trinetti:** Yeah. And maybe that's worth stating too, is that Parul and I did it primarily for us. We just said, “let's open up a room at 8 AM and let's write together tomorrow and we'll open it up, we'll invite anyone who's been to a past event for us,” so at the very least, if no one showed up, we showed up for each other. We had that going for us. It was really just providing it for each other. And then, well, turns out, first 9, and then 30, and then hundreds of people also find that valuable.

**Parul Bavishi:** And I think there's something around being seen. I've grown up mostly in cities and in cities you can feel quite invisible despite all the people, the number of people that are around you, you might be stacked on top of each other in boxes-like apartments and still not know your neighbors. And I think the internet can make us feel invisible. We see other people's work. We see that the glory of the, you know, the highlights of their day, but in Writers’ Hour… I may be romanticizing a little bit, but I feel like we see each other. We just see each other through the day, a bit like if you went to college with a bunch of dorm mates or roommates, you just see them every day doing ordinary things and that helps you grow an affection for them, which is, in a way, the beauty of being human. That's it. Just a little connection, even if it's just that I see you every single day.

And what's interesting is when we've actually met up with some of these writers, because we've had one of our first in-person meetups in London, we still felt the same. In fact, there was a lot of screaming and squealing when I saw these faces because I had seen them, I knew their faces, I know their expressions. I may not know everything about them… well, I probably don't know everything about them, but there's so much that I did recognize in a way that I would as if it was like a long-lost cousin, “oh, it's you! Oh, how have you been? I'm invested in you already because I've probably stared at you for a certain number of hours.”

**Lisa Dickson:** Yeah, the familiarity, right? That's really lovely. And as somebody who sits on the other side of the screen, you know, one of the first things I do when I get stuck when I'm writing is I just cycle through the screens and just look at people writing… which sounds weirdly voyeuristic, but it's just like, “oh, look at all of these people,” and some of them are doing the exact same thing that I am, right? They're clearly stuck, they're staring at the ceiling and spinning in their chairs or, you know, doing those kinds of things. And it's like, “oh yeah, okay, this is just part of the rhythm of what it means to be working on something, to be a writer in this.”

And now I agree, now I recognize lots of people who I see every day. And the fact that your community has grown, am I correct that it's grown mostly from word of mouth? It's kind of like this fractal gift that just keeps building in this logarithmic kind of sense. How are you dealing with this scope of things? Is it different from when you had nine people to when you have 900 people? What if you end up with a million people? I'm just really interested to see how you're thinking about scale, because of this really beautiful sense of community that you've managed to build there.

**Matt Trinetti:** That's a good question.

**Parul Bavishi:** We talked about this a lot. We did consider it and ponder it and we have ever since we began because we want it to be a good experience and if tomorrow a million people showed up, we would be a little bit surprised and we would have to adjust things pretty quickly.

**Matt Trinetti:** In one sense… because we were worried about that too, when we go from 30 to 50, to a hundred, in the moment where we had to increase our room beyond 100, which is another plan on zoom, we thought, “oh, this is going to be totally different.” And actually, I don't know if we've noticed a huge difference. Speaking of Writers’ Hour in particular, going from 50 to 100, to… we've had 300 and plus in a room… I think if we keep growing, I don't know if it's going to be hugely different. It's just the beauty of the simplicity of the format where you show up, the chat will go by quicker, there'll be a lot more faces, a lot more people sharing, but in essence, it's the 50 minutes of silent writing.

I think that room can continue to grow. It's everything else that we've bolted on top of it: the different levels of community, the different things and ways we're trying to serve people in the community at different needs states, that's the thing that has become a little bit bigger of a, not a challenge but just a thing that we're working on. But the Writers’ Hour itself, I don't know about you, Parul, I think we can keep going and it would still feel just as special.

**Parul Bavishi:** I would hope that we can still keep that level of intimacy. I think that if it was a million tomorrow, it would take us by surprise but thankfully it's just been a steady growth, so it's allowed us some time to reflect and consider and put in whatever we have to do in place.

You're right, there's not that much difference between 90 and 300, but you just have, as a host, to get used to dealing with the chat, an then we have to think about more and more hosts helping us as we get more and more hours coming through. We have two hosts, for example, for the Writers’ Hour versus just one.

**Matt Trinetti:** And that's all in the room. There's the stuff outside of the room that we've in most ways systematized and automated—the whole thing when you sign up to your welcome email to getting the links—in the early days that was very manual, we had to schedule the sessions but that's pretty much all automated right now. So every day we have, let's say 20, 30, 40 new people signing up to join us at Writers’ Hour, it's not extra lifting for us because we put in the hard work to put those systems in place, which is, yeah, thankfully, that's a headache solved mostly.

**Lisa Dickson:** Right. So you can spend more time on the people parts.

**Matt Trinetti:** Right. It’s really boring stuff but it helps us then focus on the stuff that really matters, making a really excellent experience in the room, before you enter the room and after you leave the room.

**Lisa Dickson:** Could I just jump onto a different track here for a second and pick up on something that you said to bring you to my favorite question: what do you love?

**Parul Bavishi:** This is a broad question. What do I love in general? Or just whatever comes to mind?...

**Lisa Dickson:** You can answer this in any way you want or decline to answer.

**Parul Bavishi:** I love the question by the way. I actually love the question because it's a great reflection for anyone. And I think that… and maybe this comes down to motivation for why we do anything in life, maybe, why we continue to do Writers’ Hour and why we continue to do the Salon: I love small things. Things that really… a love of little things like my coffee in the morning, seeing a bunch of writers on the screen that I've seen for days and days before, for a whole year before, it's seeing someone make a breakthrough or finish their novel, having a really good conversation with Matt about the future of the Salon, or just the small celebrations we have when something goes right. It's seeing someone's face when we had our meet up in person and just realizing that I knew them, I felt like I knew them. I was scared that it would be difficult or somehow strange to meet people that you had known for a year and a half online, but actually, it was beautiful.

Those are the things I love, the small things. I find that to me, that's what makes me happier. The big things are great. When you have big successes, like, we were nominated for a Webby, that's great, I love that, but I love that in a different way to the smallest things.

**Lisa Dickson:** Okay, I'm going to come back… I'm formulating a question about that, but I'm going to come back. Matt, do you want to take a leap at this point?

**Matt Trinetti:** Sure. I mean, I guess from a personal perspective… people listening can't see it but I have a picture of a forest behind me. I love nature. I just love being outside. Before this interview I went outside for a walk in the woods by myself, I just love the woods, I love nature, I love solitude. I also love creating or seeing, like Parul said, the little things of seeing people connect, creating a space of belonging. And I love when people feel seen, I love that stirs something in me. I love building things, I love creating things. Parul said the idea is just sitting on the phone, talking about ideas. I love dreaming up new ideas and then I love going and building those ideas.

Long ago, I… and we actually both used to work in corporate careers, both in consulting, both we escaped them, and I think having a life and a career built upon ideas, projects, things we'd like to create, things we find fun, things we want to do. That's what I love, spending my time doing that. And we've both, I think, cried a lot of tears and have sweat many hours to build this kind of life for ourselves, so I love the fact that we've done that. And I love working with Parul.

**Parul Bavishi:** Oh. He does that, he just wants to make me cry, honestly.

**Matt Trinetti:** I love making Parul cry. I actually do love making people cry in public.

**Lisa Dickson:** Great. My actual Latin motto is *non ut motis*, which is “I hate feelings.” That's great. So now I'm scared I'm just going to have to leave the room because your answers are making me want to cry.

**Parul Bavishi:** Yeah, Matt's quite dangerous. He could make you cry at the drop of a hat.

**Lisa Dickson:** Yeah. We're all just little drops of water and the only thing holding us together is our surface tension and then Matt comes along and pokes it. Thanks, I appreciate that so much.

So, I'm still kind of formulating my question but I'm thinking about this idea of those small human moments that happen when you create something for other people to be in, which I think is a really interesting way of thinking about stuff. The world is really big and quite scary these days and I know that a lot of people are sort of suffering from… I don't know what… I've heard the word “compassion fatigue” but I don't think it's that. I just think that we've started to realize how interlocking all of our challenges are and it's so easy to just kind of hunker down.

I find it so interesting, this idea of focusing on those kinds of personal moments, those little things that… you know, when I talked to my students—because I do this exercise with my students where I ask them, what do you love? And then we build our course out of what they love…

**Matt Trinetti:** It's really cool.

**Lisa Dickson:** Yeah. And you get such a different picture of people when you ask them that question than you do when you say, “okay, well, what are the problems that we have to figure out how to solve” or any of those kinds of things. I find that for myself, if I start by saying, “well, what are the challenges or barriers and then how do I get over those challenges or barriers?” I get depressed pretty quick but when I start from that question, “well, what do I love and then how do I make a space for those things to happen?” I end up in completely different places, which speaks in a way to what you're saying about, you know, what happens to your life if you start by building on that rather than building on some other kind of expectation… or, I spent $300,000 on a university degree, now I have to spend it, use that capital…

And there's something about the gift, I think, there's a kind of gift model that operates in what you've been talking about, in the idea of the Writers’ Salon and the Writers’ Hour and these kinds of projects, there's a kind of gift mentality that doesn't seem to be built on a transactional way of thinking about things where there's a kind of value that is hard to quantify, which is why I say this is like a bumblebee. That's sort of what I see from the other side of the screen. Does that make any sense or am I completely?...

**Parul Bavishi:** Yeah, it does. You’re making me think about different entrepreneurs that I've been reading about, and just thinking through that lens that you've asked, is like, what are they essentially aiming for? And maybe in the end the feeling of a community or the feeling of a space is governed by what the original plan was, what it was built on. And both Matt and I believe a lot… because we've had careers that we didn't enjoy and we've also had ups and downs and there are times we love what we do and there are times we haven't loved what we've done. But with this, I think, we're both at the same place. It's just, how can we be happy? How can we find joy in what we do and enable others to find joy in what they do?

So, the whole community is always about that. We have people who volunteer for us, where we say to them, like, “does it feel good for you? If that feels good for you, then do it. But doesn't, don't.” And that has been one of the gauges of what we move forward with and what we move away from, whereas you'll have other spaces where they might be wholly focusing on being innovators in the space, or maybe just purely money, or to prove something to themselves or to their family or to their industry or to their peers. And I don't think that's what drives us.

**Matt Trinetti:** Yeah, I agree. I just want to add on top of that, I think we are in full service to the writers in our community as long as we're enjoying ourselves and having fun. Everything we think about, everything we do, how can we make this a really lovely experience for the people that join us? That's what we think about all the time, coupled with, we have to make sure this works for us because if we don't want to do it, it's not sustainable for us, which means the thing will no longer exist, so we have to take care of ourselves, but we are in deeply, we are deeply in of service to the writers in the room.

And I think that's where we build everything from. How can we serve people? How can we make this better? How can we make people feel a greater sense of belonging? How can we help them where they're feeling stuck? And I think as much as possible, other than making sure that it works for us and we're having fun, everything else has just… we try to take ourselves out of it and just, how can we serve this group?

**Parul Bavishi:** If you zoom out a bit, we're talking about writing. Our backgrounds, you know, we've had some involvement with writing. Matt has written a book, self-published a book and has been involved with a lot of people that escaped the city who want to escape into writing. And as an editor, I always work with writers all the time, and we know that writing is a wonderful lifestyle. It's a wonderful practice. It's a wonderful guide in our lives. It's something we can do no matter what our circumstance are, we can write, we can sit and we can write, whether it's just reflecting on our day and on what's coming up, or if it's actually getting those thoughts out of our head, whether it's fiction or non-fiction.

And I think, how can we help writers do that? And the simplest answer has been a silent writing space, but then on top of that there have been other things that we do. For example, we have gold members at the Salon who'll run expert hours. Last night we had actually one of the writers in the community, Austin, run a talk on point of view and narrative. We ran this because we knew that there are writers in our community who are struggling with point of view in their fiction. How can we help? Well, the answer is to run expert hours.

**Lisa Dickson:** It must involve a lot of listening.

**Matt Trinetti:** And the beautiful part about Writers’ Hour is every day we're in the room, it's an opportunity to listen. We get to see in the chat what's everyone working on, where are they getting stuck, how was the session, and then when we ask everyone at the end, how did it go? What are you working on? Where are you feeling stuck? We're listening every day.

It's a game changer. Whenever I talk to people trying to build a community or a business, I always think of what we've stumbled upon, Writers’ Hour, and I think, how can you be in the room with people you're trying to serve every day? I've done a lot of things where I haven't been in the room with people. It's so much more difficult… if you really are trying to serve people, what a great hack, what a great shortcut it is to just be open, be in the room. I love it. I'll sing this format. It doesn't have to be Writers’ Hour, but I always challenge people, what's your Writers’ Hour? What's your thing that you can do to open up the room and just be of service?

**Lisa Dickson:** I love this idea of seeing other people working and getting stuck. This getting stuck idea is something that I find really compelling because as a teacher—I teach university students in English—and one of the hardest things I find for students is to help them to make the shift in their understanding of what a classroom is.

For example, I've heard 10,000 times “I don't speak in class because I'm not smart enough,” or “I'm afraid that I'm not going to say something smart and then people are going to judge me.” I’m helping students to shift their way of thinking about a classroom as a space where we go to explore things, not where we go to show that we've already finished exploring, you know? That shift in mindset, the way that it changes the idea of community, is so profound when they see that this is a place where we come to ask questions and questions don't mean that you've missed it, it means that you are on a path towards something.

The transformation that happens in those conversations with students is, I mean, it's mind blowing, really, because it allows them to tell a different story about what they're doing in those spaces. When you were talking about seeing where people are getting stuck, that's one of the things that I love of those moments, right? When you do your speech at the beginning and you talk about how it's a space for all kinds of writers, even people who don't think of themselves as writers… But also, you know, how was it? Did you get stuck? I think it’s such an important question because of the way that it creates a different kind of community in that space.

**Matt Trinetti:** Yeah. And I think it also comes from a place of empathy to think if you're not getting stuck either you're delusional or, you know, you're somehow immortal because everyone gets stuck. Just to give voice to it, “yeah, you might've gotten stuck, it might've been a bad session, that happens, that doesn't mean it was not successful, it just meant you had a bad session,” and just to give voice to it. Because we've been there before, right? We know, we're in this together. And we try to role model, I guess, the type of space and the type of conversation that we hope happens in the room.

**Parul Bavishi:** I've definitely heard writers say that they feel they take comfort from hearing everyone else's journey just so they too know that they're not alone in having good days, bad days, in between days, whatever it is specific to them. We often say that if there's something you're feeling, someone else in this community has felt it too. And that's true. I don't think there's ever been an emotion that has not been shared by at least another person.

**Lisa Dickson:** And I love those moments when people say, “this was a bust, I just rearranged the pens in my pencil cup for 50 minutes.” But because of the emphasis on process too… and I think this comes back to what you were saying, Parul, about seeing people every day, is it really shifts the attention away from product (here's the thing that I've made) to process, which is kind of where growth comes from, right? That's another shift we're always trying to help students to make. It's not about the exam, if it was about the exam we’d just give it to you on the first day and then you'd go home. It's about that idea of being into something that's going to change. And if it changes, it changes you. And from that, it can change the world, you know?

I find that really fascinating, the way that a consistent space kind of opens up ways of thinking about growth and change, and shifts the emphasis in such an interesting way.

**Matt Trinetti:** Yeah, that's such a great point. And this is something that's come up—we have a Gold Writers Group that we meet up with every week and we dig more into where people are feeling stuck. And one of the things that's come up recently is shifting the metric away from word count or pages to just, did I touch the work today? Did I sit there and did I think about it? Did I write one word, or maybe zero words, or maybe 100 or 1000, but that's not the metric. It's just, did I touch it? Did I visit it? Did I sit with it? And I think that speaks to process. Yeah, so totally, totally. I love that.

**Parul Bavishi:** Consistency, yeah. That's one of the hardest things, being consistent and, you know, going back to Writers’ Hour and why it works for some people, we do a monthly goal-setting workshop and we often talk about Gretchen Rubin and *The Four Tendencies*. And the question that she's answering with her book *The Four Tendencies*, I think, is just how do you achieve your goals? What sort of accountability do you need? How do you meet your own and societal expectations? Is it from yourself or is it from others? If you're an obliger, for example, a pure obliger, as long as you have external accountability you will reach your goal.

Now, I don't know that everyone who comes to Writers’ Hour are obligers, but there's certainly an element of people who come want to be seen. They want to just have someone on the screen, who's doing the same tasks as them, and that helps keep them consistent, helps keep them coming back. And then you get the by-products of that, you get friendship, you create your own virtual village.

**Lisa Dickson:** Yeah, I hear that for my students too when we come to the end of our 50 minutes of working, I have hour and 20-minute classes and we spend the last 10 minutes talking about where we got stuck and then they help each other. What I hear consistently from them is that it makes so much difference setting an intention, saying what you did and knowing there's 20 other people there for those reasons, those intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, and those can often be at odds with each other, I think. So, what you want for yourself and what you sort of feel people want from you can create a lot of tension. Those spaces create at least one spot where you can just focus and maybe forget about that tension for a minute.

And I have to say, I literally last week came to Writers’ Hour and just wrote “this page is not blank” on my computer for 40 minutes straight. I had like seven pages of just “this page is not blank” and then something happened and now that poem is getting published next week. So… Literally just being there, not going away and not giving up is so valuable, because I can see you watching me! I'm going to stay here because you put out the chairs for me, so it would be rude to my hosts, you know, to give up.

Are you hopeful?

**Parul Bavishi:** Always. Always.

**Matt Trinetti:** Yeah. Absolutely.

**Lisa Dickson:** And what makes you hopeful?

**Parul Bavishi:** I guess I always believe that we are good intrinsically. We are good. People are good. Humans are good. I believe that we're good. So, when things… if I see behavior, for example, that isn't, I assume best intentions, or I assume that maybe that person is suffering or has trouble. And I guess… life is beautiful. There are so many things that are not beautiful in the small scale, but actually, overall, being alive is wonderful.

**Lisa Dickson:** That resonates for me, definitely. Matt?

**Matt Trinetti:** Yeah. I think Parul and I share a similar DNA, we're just naturally optimistic and hopeful people. I think you said it for me. I was just going to add on top of that is that I do also believe that most people are good and when what they manifest is not good, they're probably hurting. So, just to remember that… something's happened, they're hurting, and to not take it personally.

I also think not watching the news really helps your optimism. And I mean, the news of the day is when we show up to Writers’ Hour and we hear people's news in the room, people are writing, people are making progress on work. That's good news. I think our hope is renewed every time we're in the room because we see people caring for each other.

**Parul Bavishi:** Because we have words of wisdom every single morning, and we all meditate on that, it's almost like a, I want to say prayer, but we're constantly learning. And having other influences in our lives that is not the news is really helpful, like daily words of wisdom for me, and other versions of that. I have *The Daily Stoic* on my desk. *The Daily Stoic* is so helpful.

**Lisa Dickson:** Yeah. I always say that we tell them wrong stories about ourselves. We spend all our time talking about the five really terrible people and never tell the stories about the 7 billion people who do great things, you know, who stop at red lights and go at green lights and open the door and do the million tiny, small things that allow a civilization to roll forward. And that sort of brings me back, Parul, to valuing those small things because I think that's the truth of who we are, really.

I could, oh… I could spend another three hours just asking you about the stories that you're telling with your work, but you have to get off to Writers’ Hour! I'm going to thank you so, so much for coming and spending your time with us and staying an extra 10 minutes even though I told you I was going to let you go. I hope that we get a chance maybe to chat more in the future.

We are going to put all of your links in our show notes, so people can follow up and come and find you and read your work and join the community. Thank you so much for coming and spending your time with us and letting me do a little love letter to Writers’ Salon.

**Matt Trinetti:** Thank you!

**Parul Bavishi:** We love it, thank you so much. You know, your words mean a lot. It's really lovely to hear the impact of it. It's part of our motivation, it’s just knowing that other people feel good about it. So, thank you. We appreciate it.

**Matt Trinetti:** Yeah, that's the fuel, that's our fuel. And we'd love to be back, we’d love to continue the conversation. Invite us back anytime and we'll be there with bells on. Yep.

**Lisa Dickson:** Excellent! Oh, I have things brewing already! Thank you.

Hang on! Just before we let you go, dear wyrdos out there, an update and some exciting news. A lot has happened for the London Writers’ Salon since we did this interview way back in December 2021. They’ve established their own dedicated community site where writers of all stripes can access their wonderful programming, from interviews with writers and industry experts, to critique sessions, community meetups on all kinds of topics, and, my personal favourite, a twice-monthly open mic. They’ve also launched the London Writers’ Salon podcast available in all of the usual places. Most exciting for us here at the Wyrd House is a new partnership between us and the Salon to fund membership bursaries to help to increase access to the community and all that it offers. Remember, too, that Writers’ Hours are still and always free for anyone, so come on by and bring a friend. We’ll drop the relevant links in the show notes.

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Links:

Matt’s Blog, *GiveLiveExplore*: <https://www.giveliveexplore.com/>

Matt’s TEDx: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9gh1FpoZqI>

Parul at Story Grid: <https://sgshowrunners.com/parul-bavishi/>

Parul’s Site, *Publishing Uncovered*: <https://www.publishinguncovered.com/>

London Writers’ Salon: <https://londonwriterssalon.com/>

Writers' Hour: <https://writershour.com/>

LWS Podcast: https://community.londonwriterssalon.com/c/the-lws-podcast/

Join the Community: <https://londonwriterssalon.com/#membership>

LWS Membership Bursaries: <https://londonwriterssalon.com/#scholarship-apply>

*The Four Tendencies*: <https://gretchenrubin.com/books/the-four-tendencies/intro/>

*The Daily Stoic*: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/545426/the-daily-stoic-by-ryan-holiday-and-stephen-hanselman/>

Music Credits: (All under Creative Commons Licence from [freemusicarchive.org](http://freemusicarchive.org/).)

"If We Knew All the Laws of Nature" by Robert Farmer

"Wind on My Legs" by Monplaisir

"Twinkle Twinkle" by David Mumford

"Which That is This" by Dr. Turtle

"Spirit World (Instrumental)" by Josh Woodward