

Flickering back to bright: a survey of Fresno-area arts organizations

Your feedback and comments may be included in an upcoming article.

What is your name and the name of your arts organization?

Stephen Wilson, Fresno Philharmonic

How do you categorize your organization?

- Theater company
- Orchestra / Classical music ensemble
- Museum / gallery
- Dance company
- Literary organization
- Producing organization
- Other:

Thinking back to the start of the pandemic, what was the last date your organization offered something "live" (a non-virtual performance, exhibition, festival, reading, etc.)? What was the event?

February 16, 2020 (Masterworks Concert with Barry Douglas, piano)

Do you have an anecdote or memory of the pandemic related to your arts organization that stands out for you? Can you share it?

Do you have an upcoming public live event scheduled with a specific date?

Yes

No

If so, what is it and when is it?

Masterworks Concert in September, 2021 in Shaghoian Hall (has not been publicly announced)

What are you planning for the fall season? If you haven't yet made a public announcement, when will you do so?

In the fall we are planning three live concerts in Shaghoian Hall with a chamber orchestra sized ensemble. Each program will have two performances to allow for possible capacity restrictions/social distancing. We expect to announce our plans in early June.

What sort of social-distancing and virus-mitigation options are you planning or considering for your organization's return to public life? (Realizing that regulations and recommendations can change.)

See above. Programs will be short enough to have no intermission. If necessary, we could convert the fall concerts to fully digital events or, perhaps do a hybrid live/digital model, depending on the level of restrictions.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most severe, how has your organization been impacted financially by the pandemic?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

The biggest financial challenge has been the complete disappearance of earned revenue (ticket sales). This necessitated in a dramatic cut back in our programming and employment of musicians. The generous support of our donors and sponsors as well as the unprecedented COVID-19 government relief has kept us going and allowed us to move into digital concert production.

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being extremely important, how important was government assistance (grants, loans, other financial incentives) to keeping your arts organization alive during the pandemic?

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Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

What, no 11?

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most difficult, how hard do you think it will be to convince audiences/visitors/supporters to return to your organization?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

This is perhaps the most important question confronting the performing arts. Undoubtedly, the biggest factor will be the state of the virus and levels of vaccination. Hopefully, if all goes well on that front, pent up demand for live experiences will draw people back to the concert halls and theaters.

Did your organization try a digital strategy during the pandemic? If so, what do you think your most effective offering was? And will you continue any digital components when you return to live performance/exhibition?

Yes. The Digital Masterworks Series came off better than we could have hoped. We expect to continue making digital production part of our programming mix post-pandemic.

What do you think is the biggest challenge that arts organizations now face in the greater Fresno area?

Convincing the City and County Governments to truly embrace the arts in Fresno as an engine of economic and social development. The City COVID relief grant program for the arts was a big step forward and Measure P represents a huge opportunity for Fresno. But City leaders need to lean into support for the arts for Fresno to realize its potential.

Anything you'd like to add?

Thanks for doing this!!

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