

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?

Selma Arts Center

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 2020. We were able to complete our run of PUFFS.

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?

Our production of Head Over Heels is already off to a great start! We recently held auditions and the production team will be announcing the cast shortly. Directed by Michael C. Flores, Head Over Heels will open at Pioneer Village in Selma on July 15, 2021 and will run through July 25, 2021.

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

We haven't publicly announced this yet, but The Munro Review is the best place to tell the community that ZOOT SUIT is back on our schedule with a tentative opening in November 2021. Auditions are slated to happen in late July. SAC will release more information across our social media outlets and website very soon.

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.)

As we continue to navigate this new terrain, SAC fans can expect to see a hybrid of live and digital performances through the end of the year. We can't wait until we can be back inside of the Selma Arts Center at full capacity, but for now we are excited to have access to an outdoor space that we will be transforming into the SAC outdoor theatre. In order for us to comply with CDC and local guidelines, Head Over Heels will take place outdoors, giving us the opportunity to practice social distancing and other safety measures without losing the integrity of the show and our vision for the production.

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
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>						

Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

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?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>								

Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

It's difficult to rate the severity of the financial impact this pandemic has caused SAC, but it's safe to say that, like many other arts-related organizations, we have been deeply affected and have had some serious and scary conversations about moving forward since March of 2020. Grants and other forms of assistance have been absolutely essential for us, many of our council members shifted duties and became full-time grant writers for SAC. We have so much gratitude for the businesses and individuals who continue to sponsor us and our productions. With our doors closed, we have been unable to counterbalance our overhead costs, all of which are still accumulating. There are opportunities for individuals and businesses to support SAC, and we encourage anyone who is interested in partnering with us to give us a call.

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
<input type="radio"/>									

Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

We are being optimistic that a return to quality programming, coupled with the safety measures we are putting in place, will be enough of a draw to bring our audiences back to SAC. We understand that people are of mixed emotions about coming out and being in somewhat sizable groups, but we are moving forward with the safety of our patrons in mind and keeping safety at the forefront of all we do. Ultimately, we want to bring entertainment back to our community and so we hope, like us, many of our patrons are ready to sit back and watch that curtain go up again.

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?

We offered a variety of digital programming, from free events like our cast reunion shows to stream-on-demand productions like CAPTAIN LOUIE, each of them giving us an opportunity to showcase our team's ability to "go digital." We had such a great time working on the SAC Talent Show which saw dozens of entries and a diverse array of talents from all over the valley and beyond. More recently, this year's iteration of SELMA ORIGINALS allowed us to feature filmmakers by streaming their short films to our audiences. Each of the digital events had their own level of success and, more than anything, we were proud to be able to offer digital programming and to keep working throughout the pandemic. We will continue to offer digital programming until we can fully open up again and have some exciting new offerings in the works.

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

I think there's the obvious concerns that you've already highlighted here with your questions, mainly financial concerns and the uncertainty of returning audiences. Personally speaking, if other organizations have been experiencing what SAC has, then I'm sure many local groups have really had to turn inward towards themselves to assess not only the ways in which the company is run, but a re-examination in the values of the group and the ways in which programming is curated. We have been in the middle of a global pandemic, yes, and within that same timespan we have experienced social movements calling for change. It's up to arts organizations to consider how our programming speaks to these changes, and how our positions at the intersections of art and activism can help us tell stories that entertain, uplift, and otherwise support the communities that rarely get to command the stage.

Anything you'd like to add?

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