

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?

tony sanders / Shine! Theatre Co.

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?

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

Two memories in particular come to mind: The first was what could easily qualify as the lowest we'd every experienced as an organization...the stoppage of "Tuck Everlasting, the musical". It is such a special show and we were mounting what would have been its Central Valley premiere. It was one of the strongest casts we had ever assembled and the design team were all top-notch. Having to deliver the news to that company was hard. No other way around it. It sucked. But, we'll be back and the show will be amazing! The second came around mid-way through the shelter-in-place when I realized that we were mounting virtual cabarets, spotlighting national talent on a weekly virtual talk-show (Acting Up!), successfully transitioning Camp Shine! to a virtual platform, showcasing new works (New Works Wednesday), launching The Academy (a virtual training program), producing a Master Class Series featuring Broadway talent and creating a Sensory-Friendly Theatre Channel on YouTube! We also put forth the initiative for the creation of The Valley Theatre League. It was only when we stopped to look around did we realize that we had pivoted rather nicely and were thriving! Artically, if not financially!

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

Yes

No

If so, what is it and when is it?

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

We are cautiously optimistic about reopening, so we want to roll out one show at a time. As we gain confidence with the results of the safety protocols, we will continue to make plans to produce and announce. With the loss of our home theatre, The Tower Theatre, making long term plans is challenging.

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.)

We will adhere to the most up-to-date CDC guidelines. Additionally, we will be in contact with other organizations to make sure we are in alignment with their protocols. We believe that it's important to be in concert with other theater companies in the hopes of diminishing confusion for our guests. To the best of our ability, we don't want there to be different protocols for attending each theater.

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"/>								

Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

We lost two seasons. We lost our theater. We lost our Camp Shine! home. We lost our rehearsal/audition/classroom space. We were able to pivot, but without the income from shows and camp tuition, we were barely scrapping by. While the shifting of our training programs to virtual was successful, our numbers suffered as a result. Everyone felt the burnout of navigating zoom. Our virtual cabarets helped somewhat and we saw such beautiful outpouring of love from the community...without those gift in kind, I honestly don't know where we would be.

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
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Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

This funding could/should have been the much needed lifeline for our organizaion. However, we are a small, all volunteer group that was not equipped to pursue that funding or even know how find out that it existed. That's on us and we have taken measures to make sure that we are better prepared moving forward.

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?

Our Family of artists, season pros and young artists alike, are ready! They have been studying and training to be show ready when the time comes! And, our audiences and supportors are anxiously awaiting an announcement regarding our return. We are confident that they will be back and we'll be there eagerly awaiting them with another great show!

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?

Our first foray into the digital world was our virtual cabaret fundraisers. Our first attempts we crude, but full of heart and talent. We certainly stepped up our game and began to produce some quality, professional content. We are quite proud of those shows. We also had a lot of fun doing our talk show, "Acting Up! with tony!" Our Master Class Series has allowed us to bring in some amazing Broadway talent to train our local artists and has been seen steady growth. These products all proved to be viable options to provide access to individuals who might not otherwise have it. For that reason, we are excited about continuing these brands moving forward. As we return to live performances, we anticipate incorporating some streaming options when possible to allow for greater exposure.

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

A profound lack of clear, consistent information about protocols to keep our guests and artists safe. Our guests should not have to make assumptions about expectations when attending shows. Presently, it seems that everyone has some information, but no one has all the information. It's an issue that the members of The Valley Theatre League have raised at meetings more than once. Additionally, we'd like to have greater access to information about funding for arts organization, especially the smaller companies who may not be equipped to know how or what is available to them.

Anything you'd like to add?

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