

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?

Karl Schoettler, President - Visalia Players at the Ice House Theatre

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?

Mid-February of last year (2021)

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

My wife was in rehearsals for a show that was to open on March 20 of 2020 and we had to pull the plug on that a week before the show was to open. The show was called "20th Century Blues". It didn't strike me until right now about all the number 20's associated with this story. 2020 was certainly a year to put behind us all!

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

Yes

No

If so, what is it and when is it?

The Bright Lights of Broadway is a cabaret show that will open Friday April 30 and run two weekends for a total of six performances. It will be performed outdoors in our courtyard area.

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

We are still struggling with that. We will probably run an abbreviated season and not sell season tickets.

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.)

With our first show we will be social distancing (six feet between individual groups of audience members). Refreshments (including beer and wine) will be offered but orders will be taken from the audience in their seats rather than have people wait in a line. Seats and restrooms will be sanitized in between performances. We are following guidance from the Tulare County Health Department.

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"/>							

Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

With very little income during the past year we are now operating out of our savings account. As an all-volunteer organization, we've lost a good chunk of our volunteer corps over the past year. To add to our challenges the City of Visalia (who owns our property) is putting it on the market, so we are going into fund-raising mode to be able to buy our building. We'll need to raise around \$43,000.

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

Regarding the above question: Would you care to comment?

We haven't sought any government assistance yet but may do so soon. We are short-staffed on people who can put together a grant application.

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?

I think most people are ready to get out and be in social situations as long as they know that all reasonable precautions are being taken.

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 we have tried to keep up a presence on our digital platforms. We did a "12 Days of Christmas" feature where each day featured a different performer (or group of performers) including songs, skits and yours-truly taking a pie in the face multiple times.

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

In addition to the pandemic keeping people at home we are facing a public with lots of other entertainment options, including on-line movies and other similar features.

Anything you'd like to add?

We are hoping to regroup and re-energize for the upcoming year but it's going to be a steep climb!

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