

# Support Asian American Theatres and Reach Thousands of Constituents

**A** sian American theatre companies employ hundreds of people throughout the state and reach thousands of spectators. Organizations have faced significant setbacks due to COVID-19, but this situation has also encouraged innovation in terms of shifting media platforms and expanding community service efforts. Through qualitative interviews with almost a score of Asian American organizations based in California, we have developed recommendations for preserving and amplifying the important work done by these organizations.



*East West Players. Photo credit: Steven Lam*

## Key Findings

### Affordances of COVID-Era Programming Shifts:

1. **Expanding community:** Digital programming has facilitated collaboration with those living in geographically diverse areas and reached wider audiences.
2. **Addressing Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) hate:** Artists have worked to educate and increase awareness regarding AAPI communities in order to respond to anti-Asian hate.
3. **Community action:** In times of crisis, organizations have mobilized to care for communities via workshops, resource distribution, and personal security.



*Theatre of Yugen. Photo Credit: Shannon Davis*

### Challenges Associated with COVID-Era Programming Shifts:

1. **Loss of work and revenue:** Companies faced losses due to cancellations and pressure to devalue ticket prices for virtual productions.
2. **Lack of training/time:** Companies are interested in innovation using digital platforms, but lack knowledge and resources required to do so.
3. **Cost of transition:** Many companies are unable to invest in new technologies in order to keep up with production quality of competing organizations and platforms.

## Recommendations

1. **More state funding opportunities for cultural workers:** AAPI theatre companies in California are serving their communities in diverse ways, through and beyond performance work. Therefore, arts grants should, where appropriate, be commensurate with those available to education and social service providers.
2. **Collaborative grants:** Many companies are too small to fund a full-time technologist; it would be useful for a grant to fund a full-time technologist who can work with several different companies. Similarly, funding one or more studios for filming high-quality work at no additional cost to small companies would be greatly beneficial.
3. **Funds for archiving:** Many companies have expressed a need for more reliable archiving infrastructure. Funds must be made available to help preserve this rich component of California's AAPI cultural heritage.



*TeAda Productions.*  
Photo credit: Somsy Vejsiri



*Theatre of Yugen.*  
Photo Credit: Shannon Davis



*East West Players.*  
Photo credit: Steven Lam



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Photo credit: Steven Lam



*First Voice SF.*  
Photo credit: Mark Shigenaga



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This project was made possible with the generous support of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center and the California Asian American and Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus.

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