2019-20 YEAR IN REVIEW

IMPACT AND HIGHLIGHTS

The Campaign For
UC San Diego
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

When ArtPower kicked off its 16th year of presenting live arts on UC San Diego’s campus, we never imagined we would face an imminent shutdown of all performances after March 10, and essentially cancel a third of our season. Typically, our impact report summarizes overall scope and connection with students, campus and external stakeholders. This year’s story is different. We decided to bring the lens in closer and have personal conversations with artists impacted by COVID-19 and our team of UC San Diego ArtPower marketing students who shared what ArtPower meant to them during an abruptly canceled spring quarter. Some of the artists scheduled for spring 2020 have shared personal testimonials, and we invite you to enjoy their feedback with us.

When news of COVID-19 lockdowns first hit campus emails, along with instructions to cancel all gatherings, we realized that we had artists who were in transit and were scheduled to be appearing within 24 hours after the closure. Although we could have appealed to have that event take place, the safety of all was paramount. Because we were canceling the season without any governmental orders in place, we chose to pay our artists’ contracts. Artists are an extremely vulnerable segment of the population and for many, these bookings are their only source of income. I am proud to say that the university supported this decision and all artists received their contracted fees.

Artists are the most visible part of the arts economy, but everyone from costume makers to agents to lighting suppliers and beyond have been affected. We have heard from artists, agents and managers that not all peer institutions made the same decisions we did. This has had serious repercussions for the entire field that will continue to resonate for years to come. We are touched to learn that our decision — a decision which would not have been possible without your generous support — genuinely helped the artists we worked with. Thank you for helping ArtPower stand out in the presenting community as an example.

With kind regards,

Jordan Peimer
Executive Director, ArtPower
What did ArtPower’s support mean to you in the context of the pandemic?

The future seems as tenuous and uncertain for everyone working in the arts now as it did in the beginning of the pandemic. Receiving our artist fee from ArtPower despite the performance cancellations due to COVID-19 was not only significant for us financially, but was deeply meaningful in myriad ways. It is so important as artists to feel that we are able to imagine: to have the space to be generative and dream towards the future. It is also crucial to our practice to be able to set our sights on a future in which our livelihood and vocation are relevant and the art we are making is vital.

The payment from ArtPower was, in this sense, an investment in our future as an ensemble and our relationship to our art form — a lifeline that has helped us to maintain the space to think innovatively and adapt to this moment. Alongside this investment comes a tangible feeling of friendship and trust from ArtPower; that what we do is compelling, meaningful — even essential — and this has been an important contribution to our reinvigorated sense of purpose as a quartet.

As we look toward the future, we are fully committed to our art form and to the power of its potential to create the space for our audiences and communities to dream and imagine together. In the face of continuing global struggles, this kind of imagination will be much needed, and we will continue to serve our communities artistically with presentations that promote interaction and conversation. ArtPower’s investment in the future of Spektral Quartet empowers us to realize our mission through this difficult time in ways that are not merely feasible, but that are vibrant, intentional and necessary.
What do you miss most about performing live?

One of the most rewarding things about performing live is, of course, the sense of communal experience that we performers share with the audience. As everything has moved online, our lives have become increasingly visual and verbal; it feels as if there is less time to listen, to be present, and to absorb. We so look forward to a return to live performance, to share with an audience the wonderful feeling of timelessness that live music has a remarkable way of creating.

Why is it so important to support venues and presenters through this crisis?

We consider a significant part of our work to be the collaboration with a presenter or venue to bring each audience an experience that is unique and impactful. Presenters and venues not only provide artists with a platform and a stage for their ideas, but also create spaces where curious audiences can come to be inspired and challenged. That cultivation and care helps create community and allows our voices as musicians to reach further and have more impact. Musical venues mean so much to so many people: they are havens; playgrounds; workshops; and places of exploration, curiosity and shared experience. They give us a place to come together and experience respite from our daily lives, or to process things we are experiencing. These environment — made possible by forward-thinking venues and visionary presenters — represent a commitment to serve the evolving needs of communities and artists, and to foster our ability to dream together as a society.
What does ArtPower’s support mean to you as an artist in the context of the pandemic?

ArtPower’s support has helped me focus and work with a healthy amount of urgency in a time where the industry of live performance has slowed down tremendously. Their platform and the ways that [ArtPower] has adapted to the pandemic have provided me an avenue to channel my creative output.

What do you miss most about performing live?

I miss being in the same space with people. After a powerful show is performed and experienced, I miss the shared spiritual and mental space that the physical space allows.

What have you been doing to stay creative while at home?

I have been consuming many different forms of media and reexperiencing some of my favorite movies and albums. I have also been working diligently on the virtual/cinematic version of “Adapting History,” which will be presented through ArtPower.

How are you shifting your art to perform virtually during this time?

I’ve been longing to explore the medium of film for quite some time. Adapting History will be my first exploration of a long-form narrative film.

Why is it so important to support venues and presenters through this crisis?

Theater will come back — I believe stronger than ever. The world, our country and our community will have a newfound respect for those who work hard to find reasons for human beings to gather.
INTERVIEW WITH FOUNDER SUNNY JAIN

What did having ArtPower honor our commitment to the artists during the beginning of the pandemic (paying out the artist fee and hotel amidst the cancellations due to COVID-19) mean to you?

This meant Red Baraat could continue as planned with the rest of our tour. ArtPower was an anchor date for us with other club shows booked around them. Without the support of that fee we would have had to cancel everything.

What have you been doing to stay creative while at home?

In an effort to find a meaningful way to be creative and stay connected with other artists, I began a series called “Quarantet.” The idea was based on full collaboration with four artists and a video director. Each artist remotely recorded and sent tracks back and forth to each other with no agenda except “in the moment” creativity and quality audio and video production. As major events were taking hold across the country, the focus started centering on raising funds for organizations such as The Bail Project, Sakhi for South Asian Women, Black Trans Femmes in the Arts Collective, and Everytown for Gun Safety. We ultimately produced 10 music videos, collaborated with nearly 30 artists and 4 video directors, and raised close to $2,000 for social justice causes.

Why do you believe it is so important to support venues and presenters through this crisis?

Art and music are essential to culture. Without them, we would be losing a vital way that human beings commune and find beauty and meaning in life. Venues and presenters are part of what allows this to happen. They provide a space, a vision and connection for artists and audiences.
STUDENT SUPPORT AND SUCCESS

Student support and success initiatives have never been of greater importance for UC San Diego than they are now. Learning in this new environment has challenged some of our scholars in ways unseen before. Historically, ArtPower has been lauded for expanding the horizons of our students. Just as learning has adapted, ArtPower strives to adapt as well, to ensure this legacy continues.

Last year, our students shared with us that attending an ArtPower performance was a way they engaged in self-care. In keeping with that sentiment, we were heartened to learn that the ArtPower team became a deeper resource of community and support for our students during the initial phase of the lockdown and beyond.

We surveyed members of our 12-person ArtPower student marketing team and are happy to share their feedback with you.
Once campus shifted to online learning, how did being a part of the ArtPower marketing team help support you?

• ArtPower helped me financially (via my student worker salary).
• Staying busy helps keep me sane.
• Being able to interact with my colleagues via Zoom on a weekly basis helped me still socialize with fellow students, even in quarantine.
• Being a part of the ArtPower marketing team helped me feel as though I wasn’t so isolated from campus.
• The team is like a family! We were all going through the same struggles, so it was comforting to know that we weren’t alone in our uncertainty. We checked in with each other often and, despite being far apart, I still felt connected to my team members.
• Being a part of the ArtPower marketing team provided me with a routine during quarantine and gave me something to do with the surplus of time. Also, because I wasn’t able to go home to my family, the ArtPower marketing team gave me a sense of support and people to talk to if I ever needed help.

This pandemic required many organizations to pivot and come up with creative solutions for doing their work. How did your workload change during the spring quarter for ArtPower? How were you pushed creatively in your work for ArtPower?

• I was inspired to take on a bigger leadership role and help ArtPower become more active on social media. Remote work also pushed me to think of ways to increase productivity and management. I think even without remote work that was much needed.
• I believe my workload increased because of the creative freedom we were given to pursue our own projects and learn new skills. Joanna Christian (associate director of marketing and communications) and the student team leads did an amazing job of keeping everybody on track while also giving us time to push ourselves creatively through self-guided projects and more open assignments.
• Because our events were canceled, we had to come up with new ideas to continually promote artists and creative events that were happening virtually, as well as trying our best to stay positive in times of great distress.

Why is it so important to support students and student workers, now more than ever?

• I think everyone's financial stability is affected at the moment. Those who were self-supporting need these jobs more than ever. It's important to allow students to remain safe by staying at home instead of reporting in-person. Health and wellness should always be prioritized.
• It’s very important to support students and student workers because everyone is going through a hard time. Some students may have difficult living or family environments, which makes it very challenging for them during this stay-at-home time. It is very helpful when students are supported in other facets of their lives, and I appreciate that ArtPower has supported us so much.
• This is important because not all families still have a reliable source of income. For instance, I know a student whose parents both lost their jobs and they are the only ones working in their family. Not all students were able to go home during this time and are living separated from their families. I've also spoken to some students who are living at home and talk about feeling like their mental health is declining by being stuck at home.

What did having ArtPower honor our commitment to the artists during the beginning of the pandemic mean to you?

• This support means a lot to me! Artists are struggling during this time, and I think it is very admirable that ArtPower honored that commitment to supporting artists by paying them regardless of the required cancellations.
• As a former musician, that meant a lot to me because I know how overworked and underpaid many artists are and how hard they have to work just to secure gigs like ArtPower. I'm sure the decision to pay our artists will make ArtPower an enticing place to perform for many other people too.
• It reinforced my opinions about ArtPower being a supportive and caring organization.
LOOKING AHEAD

For the first half of the 2020-21 season, ArtPower will be working with artists we have already supported to develop new work for the virtual space. We are focusing on artists as activists, particularly around the art and ideas that resonate with UC San Diego students. We are excited to have commissioned new work from Dahlak Brathwaite, whose work speaks to audiences young and old. We are initiating a virtual residency with Ephrat Asherie Dance Company, which provides not only support, but also development of new work for the 2021-22 season. This will be an opportunity for ArtPower audiences to peek into Asherie's process and understand the important roots and cultures from which her work springs.

We know ArtPower means a lot to you and we are so grateful for your ongoing support. We hope you see ArtPower's significance in our community of students and artists as well. ArtPower is more than just an arts organization; it is a collective of sharing, learning, inspiration and joy.

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Thank you for supporting ArtPower at UC San Diego. Your contributions are part of the Campaign for UC San Diego — our comprehensive fundraising effort concluding in 2022. Together with our philanthropic partners, we will continue our nontraditional path towards revolutionary ideas, unexpected answers, lifesaving discoveries and planet-changing impact.

To learn more about ArtPower, please visit artpower.ucsd.edu.