



EUGENIE CHAN THEATER PROJECTS

**ECTP COVID  
IMPACT RESPONSE  
SURVEY PROJECT**

## Introduction

At the very end of 2020, ECTP had just finished a devising process via Zoom to develop a digital version of *The Truer History of the Chan Family*, something we envisioned our audiences could safely view online. Since we could no longer present a live performance during the Covid-19 pandemic, we pivoted to a virtual one. We were about to go into production when the January 2021 Covid-19 surge hit. Ugh. We decided to postpone until the public health landscape became safe to create again. But when would that be? What kind of health and safety protocols could we expect? Would audiences return? If they did return, what kind of theater experience would they want?

To answer these questions we went to our best source: our community. In August 2021 we emailed surveys tailored to three core groups: our Patrons, Peer Producers, and Community Partners. You will see our overarching takeaways and our detailed analyses in the report that follows.

We are extremely grateful to all who responded. In addition, we thank the Ronald H. Epstein Foundation and the Phyllis C. Wattis Covid Relief Fund for their support. A special shout out of appreciation to survey specialist, Shauna Satnick, whose superb analyses power this report.

The purpose of this survey is to serve as a guide to moving forward for ECTP and colleagues in a time of pandemic-informed arts programming and production. Included in this document are analyses, data visualizations, and recommendations based on the ECTP 2021 Patron Survey, Peer Producer Survey, and Community Partner Survey. The surveys consisted of multiple-choice questions, “check all that apply” boxes, and short answers. Each section is broken down by survey type and furthermore by question. All surveys were anonymous.

The survey was distributed to ECTP patrons, fellow arts producers and AAPI-centric community partners (cultural and neighborhood centers ) through our opt-in mailing list and 1:1 outreach. The creators of the survey and summary are not trained data collectors, but worked together, referencing best practices and survey questionnaire design and reporting format from Shugall Research, Arts Services Inc, Indigo-Ltd, CAST, and Audience Outlook Monitor.

### Acknowledgments

Survey content and design, graphic design, editors: Eugenie Chan & Marcy Straw

Survey formatting, deployment, data collection, compilation and analysis of findings: Shauna Satnick



## Peer Survey Findings & ECTP Response

The Peer Producer Survey was sent to 76 people on September 29, 2021. We received 32 responses. This survey's purpose was to learn how colleagues of ECTP are handling returning to theater. We were interested in learning about their pandemic producing experience and thoughts for the future, recognizing that there may be a gap between what activities are declared safe and the comfort level of patrons, artists and staff.

Like ECTP, a majority of our Peer Producers serve AAPI audiences as well as general theatergoers. Standout findings support ECTP's plan to offer a hybrid experience, as most peers will continue to offer online programming in addition to in-person live performance or events. Most provided online programming during the pandemic's shelter-in-place period.

When surveyed in Fall 2021, 31% reported that they were actively rehearsing in-person; 27% say they're rehearsing both in-person and virtually. 16% were rehearsing only virtually. 25% reported they were not rehearsing at all.

Like our peers, we anticipate working and rehearsing in-person and/or virtually, following CDC recommendations and union protocols; and for in-person performances, requiring proof of vaccination, masking, limiting the number of participants and audiences, and following robust sanitation protocols.

If the need arises for artists to capture content via home studios, ECTP will provide safe and sanitary delivery of equipment and materials, along with training to use mics, cameras, laptops, apps and other devices.

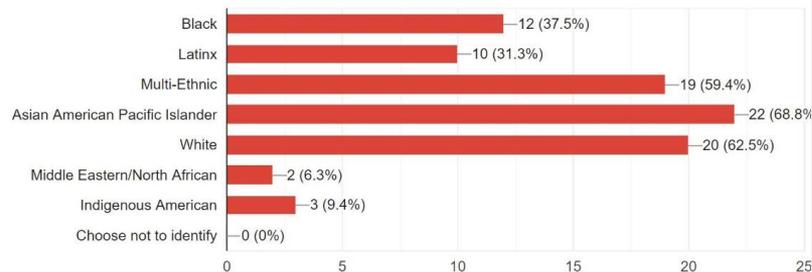


*“People want to tell their stories. Can you design an experience that is joyful and encourages people to be vulnerable enough to share their stories?”*

# Producers told us who they served

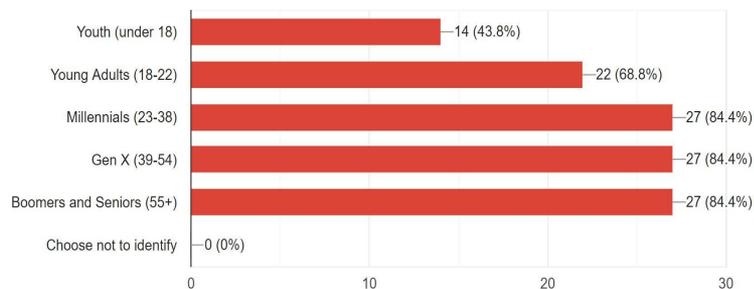
1. Select the ethnic groups you most frequently serve. Check all that apply.

32 responses



2. What age groups do you serve? Check all that apply.

32 responses



Peer producers surveyed serve multiple groups, with 69% serving AAPI, 62% white and 59% multi-ethnic groups.

91% primarily serve women, 75% primarily men and 56% serve queer, trans, non-binary people.

84% serve Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers and Seniors, respectively. 67% serve young adults; 44% also serve youth.

Top responses for current or planned safety protocols:

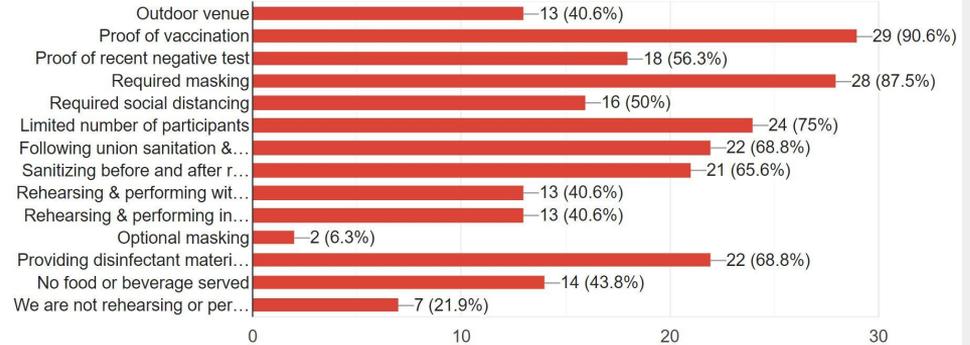
- Proof of vaccination (91%)
- Required masking (88%)
- Limited number of participants (75%)
- Following union sanitation & Covid-19 protocols, and providing disinfectant materials for everyone (69% respectively)
- Sanitizing before/after rehearsals and performances (66%).

7

**How will they keep audiences safe?**

5. What safety/hygiene protocols are you using/do you plan to use for in-person rehearsal and performance? Check all that apply.

32 responses



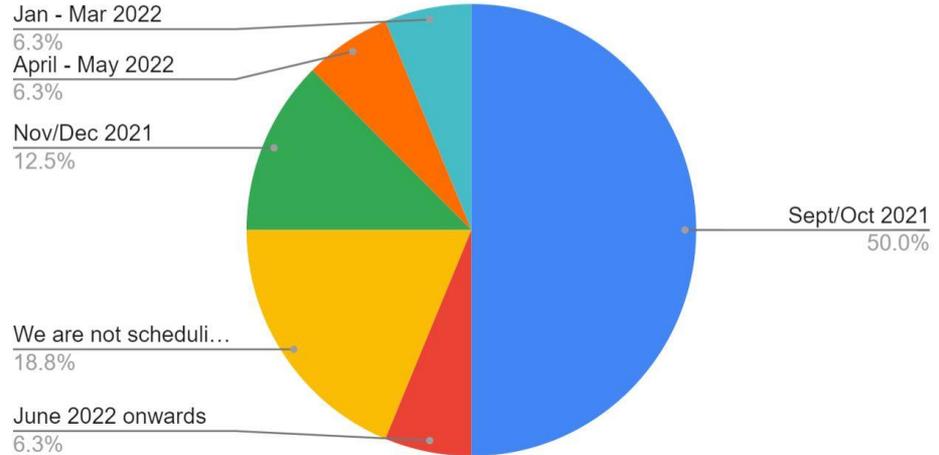
56% cited "proof of recent negative test", 50% cited a "required social distancing", 44% will not serve food or beverage, and 41% wanted to rehearse and perform with improved HVAC; in spaces with open windows; or in an outdoor venue, respectively.

## When is their first in-person event?

Half of all peer producers reported Sept-Oct 2021 as the first in-person event they've scheduled. 19% said they are not scheduling in-person events yet.

13% stated Nov-Dec 2021 as their first in-person event. 6% would not produce until Jan-Mar 2022, Apr - May 2022, and Jun 2022 onwards, respectively.

### 7. When is the first in-person event you are scheduling to take place?

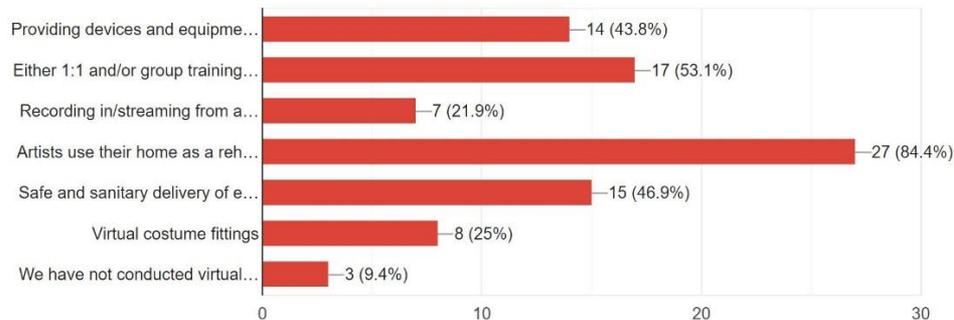


## What protocols will they use to protect artists?

- 85% report that Artists use their home as a rehearsal/recording/ performance location
- 53% are doing either 1:1 and/or group training in how to use mics, cameras, laptops, apps, etc.

6. What hygiene and access protocols are you using for virtual rehearsal or performance?  
Check all that apply.

32 responses



- 47% are providing safe and sanitary delivery of equipment, devices, costumes, props, etc. and/or providing devices and equipment if the artist doesn't have them
- Only 25% are conducting virtual costume fittings
- 22% are recording/streaming in an outdoor location
- 9% have not conducted virtual rehearsals or performances

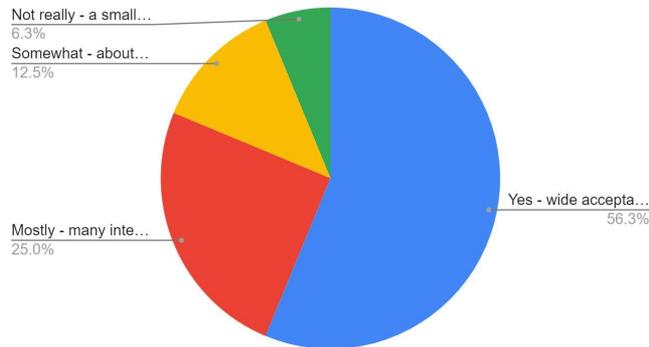
## Virtual Programming

- During the pandemic, 94% of peer producers offered pre-recorded performances; of them, 72% offered pre- or post-performance engagement.
- 68.8% offered real-time ability for audiences to interact with one another.
- Over half offered real-time ability for audience and performers to interact.
- 50% live streamed performances and interactive events.
- All respondents provided virtual programming during the pandemic.

**8% of peer producers say they'll continue to offer virtual programming in the future.**

**16% are unsure. No one said "no."**

### 10. Was it successful in engaging your stakeholders?



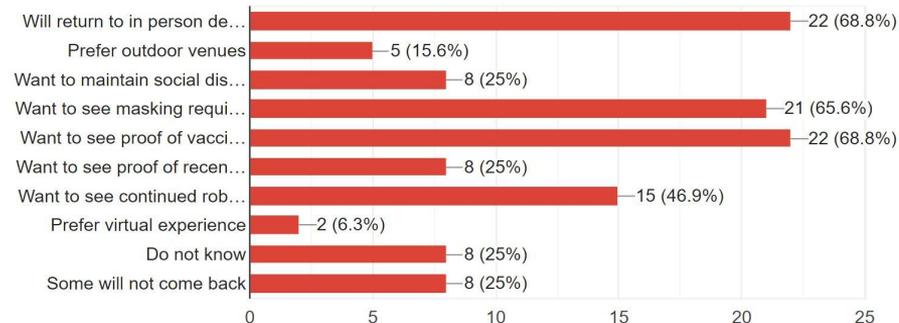
- 56% of respondents said that there was "wide acceptance of virtual programs"
- 25% said "Mostly - many interacted with virtual programs"
- 13% reported "Somewhat - about half engaged"
- 6% said "Not really - a small % interacted with virtual programs."

## How do their patrons want to return?

While peer producers checked multiple boxes, 69% said that their patrons will return in-person depending on CDC or local health department recommendations and want to see proof of vaccination. This was closely followed by 66% wanting to see masking requirements observed. Nearly half want to see continued robust cleaning procedures.

12. Going forward, what are you learning about how your patrons want to return or engage with your theater? Check all that apply.

32 responses



25% said they do not know, some will not come back, want to see proof of recent negative tests, and want to maintain social distance. 16% said they would prefer outdoor venues; 6% would prefer a virtual experience.

*Overall, other theaters' patrons want to return depending on government guidelines and masking, and want to see proof of vaccination.*

## What was not successful about virtual programming? What would you do differently?

56% said that there was "wide acceptance of virtual programs"

25% said "Mostly – many interacted with virtual programs"

13% reported "Somewhat – about half engaged"

6% said "Not really – a small % interacted with virtual programs."

"Financially it was not very successful. Although our live performances are free, we get donations post show by 'passing the hat'. Offering free programming online didn't provide the same ratio of income."

"We still have not found a way to work on musicals over Zoom. Also, some writers do not wish to explore their work on this platform. We are continuing to investigate ways of improving the ability to work on musicals over Zoom or through other digital platforms. ...we've gotten feedback from our board and donors that we did not 'program' enough externally facing events..."

"The creation process was successful and we learned a number of new skills. The 'performance' dimension was utterly unrewarding, since there was no interaction with artists or audiences."

"To successfully do this in the future, need tech training, better access to closed captioning and ASL services, and equipment."

"Virtual rehearsal needs to allow space and time for actor participation more thoughtfully than with in-person rehearsals. Dedicated time for discussion pre and post rehearsal with the director either 1:1 or as a group. Actors also benefited from having a 'green room texting chat group'."

"There is absolutely Zoom fatigue. We're trying to avoid passive webinar-style arts presentations."

"More funding needed for this programming."

"We have found a larger number of no-shows for virtual events."

"Signed up but don't show up. People are tired of virtual meeting."



*"What was impressive was the ferocity of the artists in their desire to keep creating and sharing their work. Especially the importance of connection and reflection in real time of the current events. Art saves lives despite pandemics:-)."*

*"We chose to produce a podcast rather than Zoom performances."*

*"It was crazy difficult to learn all the new technology necessary for producing a quality show."*

*"It's a challenge but artists are so resilient."*

*"It taught us to be more nimble and flexible and allowed us to build upon digital work we had begun years before the pandemic."*

*"We LOVE podcasting. It provides great artistic freedom for the makers, and it's an accessible, flexible, mobile, intimate, satisfying personal theatrical/story-telling experience."*

*"... We are currently displaced and the rebuilding will take years. Virtual and outdoor programming is currently our mode of programming."*

*"We are never going to reduce the risk of COVID exposure to 0, so everyone -- artists, staff, technicians and audiences alike -- will have to come to terms with their level of comfort in this new world."*

*"It is more difficult to establish a sense of play and collaboration during virtual rehearsals... recommend allowing more dedicated time to scene study and conversation. If filming virtually, I would also encourage multiple filming days. I would also discuss editing processes and expectations early in the process."*

*"Some people enjoyed the virtual experience immensely."*

*"It was awesome! Love the level of experimentation and ingenuity it forced out of all of us!"*

*"It's still difficult. Virtual offerings are not as impactful compared to the in-person experience but it's still important. Virtual theater's advantage is making it accessible for folks who can't experience theater in-person like people with disabilities, and folks who live outside the Bay Area."*

*"We do not have understudies, which will be a challenge if anyone tests positive."*



## Conclusions

Overall, there still seems to be much division concerning a return to in-person programming and rehearsals. As of Fall 2021, most peer producers report that they are rehearsing in-person and hybrid (in-person and virtually), but not exclusively virtually. Many had not returned to rehearsals at that time. Half of the respondents are back with in-person events, while many said they are not scheduling in-person events yet. All respondents produced online programs during the early pandemic.

There's a consensus about audience safety/hygiene protocols, particularly with regards to CDC recommendations. While proof of vaccination, required masking, limited number of participants and following union sanitation protocols rank at the top as well, optional masking remains near the bottom. Producer respondents reported a majority of their patrons will return in-person depending on government guidance, followed by wanting masking requirements observed.

Takeaways:

- Based on producer feedback, should ECTP put up a show in the coming year, a hybrid or in-person rehearsal model would be feasible.
- If ECTP works, rehearses and/or performs virtually, it will be key to provide training in how to use devices and applications, as well as provide materials, devices if artists lack them, and safe and sanitary delivery of all items.
- Recording in an outdoor location was not a favored practice among surveyed peer producers, and may be less viable unless critical to the story line.

**Appendix:**

**List of All Questions**

**Target Audience Considerations**

## We asked the Peer Producers the following questions:

1. Select the ethnic groups you most frequently serve. Check all that apply.
2. What age groups do you serve? Check all that apply.
3. Select the gender identity groups you most frequently serve. Check all that apply.
4. Are you actively rehearsing now?
5. What safety/hygiene protocols are you using/do you plan to use for in-person rehearsal and performance? Check all that apply.
6. What hygiene and access protocols are you using for virtual rehearsal or performance? Check all that apply.
7. When is the first in-person event you are scheduling to take place?
8. What virtual programming did you offer during the pandemic? Check all that apply.
9. Will you continue to offer virtual programming in the future?
10. Was it successful in engaging your stakeholders?
11. OPTIONAL: What was not successful? What would you do differently?
12. Going forward, what are you learning about how your patrons want to return or engage with your theater? Check all that apply.
13. OPTIONAL: Finally, anything else you'd like to share about making theater in a pandemic? Your feedback is important to us.

Your feedback is valuable to us.

## Target Audience Considerations

Demographically, peer producer respondents have an older audience that identifies mostly as female and AAPI. There are commonalities across these patrons, particularly with how they want to return to in-person events.

Most AAPI, senior, or female audiences will return to in-person depending on government guidance, and with proof of vaccination.

Across all ethnic groups, the number one reported safety measure for returning: depending on government recommendations.

Seniors vs. AAPI vs. Women on how patrons want to return to theater

