

Communities *of* Change:

Traditional Arts as Enduring
Social Practice in California's Bay Area

LILY KHARRAZI AND AMY KITCHENER



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Commissioned by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Performing Arts Program





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Written and Researched by
Lily Kharrazi and Amy Kitchener
Alliance for California Traditional Arts

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Cover: Susana Arenas Pedroso is a Cuban artist who received one of ten Hewlett 50 Commissions made in the folk and traditional arts in 2021 along with Dance Brigade (aka Dance Mission Theater). Photo by Brooke Anderson.

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Table of Contents

Foreword from the Authors	7
I. Introduction	9
II. What Are the Folk and Traditional Arts?	12
The Question of Terminology	
Contemporary Practices in Active Communities	
Traditional Modes of Transmission	
Informal Structures: Family and Community Learning	
Formal Structures: From Classes to Academies	
III. A Regional Footprint with Broad Impacts	17
Radical Precedents of Cultural and Racial Identity Movements	
Observations and Provocations through Multiple Lenses	
First Peoples: Native California	
Native and Indigenous Artists: Protocols First	
Navigating Protocols and Establishing Best Practices for Funders	
Beyond Revitalization: Cultural Practice and Activism in the Bay Area	
Indigeneity in the Diaspora: Tradition and Tradition-Based Expressions	
Pushing Boundaries: Tradition-Inspired Work and Neo-Indigeneity	
Building Capacity and Creating Opportunities	
African and African Diasporic Traditions	
Mexican and Mexican American Traditions	
South Asian Traditions	
Chinese Traditions	
IV. Models of Support for Traditional Arts	35
National, State, Regional, and Local Infrastructures	
Getting to Funding: Nonprofits, Budget Thresholds, Bold Initiatives	
The Festival Model of Performing Culture	

The San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival
 A Learning Model: Pedagogy to Challenge Dominant Narratives
 East Bay Center for the Performing Arts
 A Model for Local Spaces: Depth and Breadth
 Los Cenzontles Mexican Cultural Arts Academy

V. Recommendations	44
Art Forms	
Venues	
Who are the Beneficiaries?	
Priorities and Values for Designing the Traditional Arts Commission	
Investment and Longer-Term Impacts	
Advocacy and Field Building	
Applicant Considerations and Supports	
VI. Conclusion	48
VII. Appendices	50
A. Appendix A: Bay Area Cultural Communities and Their Art Forms	
B. Regional Snapshots of Counties: Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Marin, Monterey, Napa, and Sonoma	
C. Interviews Conducted by ACTA	
D. Selected Bibliography	
E. Footnotes	

Foreword from the Authors

Consider this landscape: California is host to the country’s largest immigrant population, accounting for over one-quarter of the state’s population and comprising a third of the entire labor force. Of the immigrants who arrived between 2010 and 2019, more than half (53%) were born in Asia, while 31% were born in Latin America. Half of California’s children have at least one immigrant parent.

Bringing this closer to the Bay Area, the Public Policy Institute of California reports that in 2019, foreign-born residents represented at least one-third of the population in five California counties: Santa Clara (39%), San Mateo (35%), Los Angeles (34%), San Francisco (34%), and Alameda (33%).²

These statistics bear fruit in the Bay Area, where First Peoples and immigrant populations are an important part in the traditional arts ecosystem. For Indigenous artists, the assertion and revitalization of cultural life actively counters narratives of historic tragedy. For immigrant artists, if a diasporic community already exists, there may be pathways to nurture their practices because their forebears, now hyphenated Americans, can welcome them and provide various forms of support for their artistic practices. In all these scenarios, traditional artists are key cultural translators, bridging worldviews and practices from home countries to the diaspora.

While folk and traditional arts as a funding category do not appear in most philanthropic arts portfolios, we contend that these practices offer

a way to engage deeply with cultural communities on their own terms, and to broaden funding narratives to recognize a vital field that is both under-resourced and under-recognized. By engaging with the cultural specificity found in the traditional arts field, we can extrapolate broader principles to shape funding, policy, or program design that can embrace a diversity of arts practices beyond Eurocentric art forms.



Mariachi maestro Juan Morales (L) teaching his 2007 apprentice Erasmo Villareal (R) in the Central Valley.

Photo: Sherwood Chen/ACTA

Our ambition to describe and contextualize the complex field of traditional arts and the synergistic cultural, social, and political movements that have made California and the Bay Area a hospitable epicenter is a tall order. This sentiment is in direct relationship to the unique opportunity that the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions in Folk and Traditional Arts offer the field. Winning a major commission gives artists and organizations a chance to dream big and bold with adequate resources, and while this opportunity may be an anomaly in our vibrant field, the acknowledgment by a major funder and thought leader in the arts validates further that traditional arts are of critical relevance to communities, as well as providing high artistic caliber. This report, which began as an internal document for the Hewlett Performing Arts team as a “landscape scan” of the field, is adapted here for a broader audience. It is by no means a comprehensive inventory, but it is built upon the trust that artists, culture bearers, community organizations, and funders have in us by inviting us into their communities, conversations, commemorations, intimate ceremonies, and to their kitchen tables.

Respectfully,

Amy Kitchener, *Executive Director and Co-founder*

Lily Kharrazi, *Director of Special Initiatives*

Alliance for California Traditional Arts

I. Introduction

The Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions project is an \$8 million grant initiative across 11 San Francisco Bay Area counties, designed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation’s support for performing arts. On October 26, 2021, the [Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions](#) announced that it had awarded 10 grants of \$150,000 for commissioning new work by artists working in the folk and traditional arts. The awards announcement culminated an 18-month process that included the development of the proposal guidelines and application, outreach to potential artists and organizations, two national review panels, and two internal reviews. These processes informed the final decisions for the 10 commissions, made by the Hewlett Foundation Performing Arts Program staff and director. The traditional arts commissions have been the fourth of five arts disciplinary cycles of grants in Hewlett’s 50 Arts Commissions initiative, and it represents the largest commissioning program investment to the traditional arts sector nationally.

The Hewlett Foundation partnered with the [Alliance for California Traditional Arts](#) (ACTA), California’s dedicated statewide service organization and intermediary grantmaker, to research, analyze, and write a report to inform and guide the planning and design of the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions for Folk and Traditional Arts. This report is a product of that work. Traditional arts are the expressions of deeply held, collective values and are a pathway to support communities and artists that exemplify social change. This report is intended for funders, arts

administrators, policymakers, curators, traditional artists, and activists who engage with a diversity of peoples, aesthetics, languages, and locations, who are seeking to learn more about these rich practices, and wish to engage with the work of culture bearers and practitioners as part of their own programs.

Over the past 25 years, we, the team at ACTA, have observed that the vast majority of artists and organizations in the traditional arts field have

never received the philanthropic investment that would allow them to realize long-term visions for change in their communities. There has been no concerted national effort to invest in, convene, or capitalize these artists and organizations, reflecting a foundational inequity in arts funding in the United States. As a result, masters of traditional arts forms, and the organizations they have founded and lead, lack the resources that would allow them to plan for and realize long-term goals at a

large scale. The constant effort to make-do with what local resources are available creates a low ceiling for many traditional artists and organizations, limiting their ability to imagine and execute their art to the highest scale and standards. The Hewlett 50 Arts Commission for Folk and Traditional Arts represents a unique philanthropic opportunity for this field and will have major lasting impacts on participating traditional artists and their related communities of practice across the Bay Area.

Traditional arts have been mobilized as a tool for collective action in communities across the U.S. for generations. Traditional artists of great skill and accomplishment have been the foundation and engine for these changes, often serving as teachers, creators, and visionaries, as well as advocates, managers, fundraisers, curators, and planners. As organic community leaders, traditional artists have historically been critical actors in the fight against racial, social, cultural, and economic inequity



Vietnamese dan tranh musician Vân-Ánh Võ (R) and her 2019 apprentice, Thu Vu (L) in Fremont.

Photo: Julián Antonio Carrillo/ACTA

at the local level. In these contexts, it is the artists who bring communities together, share knowledge, create new narratives, and advocate for policy change. Artists and culture bearers lead collective imagination toward change by convening community members who are bounded by cultural ways of knowing, and by lifting up ancestral knowledge and practices as a source of strength to counter forces of structural racism, which manifest in vast disparities in health, education, jobs, and individual freedom.

This report provides a landscape study and inventory of traditional arts activities, key artists, and organizations across the 11 San Francisco Bay Area counties, including Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, Marin, Monterey, Napa and Sonoma counties. It includes a broader contextual view of the field nationally, as well as significant Bay Area history that has shaped the sector we know today. We discuss and interrogate definitions and terminology, and describe case studies illustrating some of the larger issues and nuances inherent in this discipline, such as tradition and innovation, Native California practices, concepts of indigeneity, and cultural immersion as a teaching model. We list major cultural communities and related art forms across the wide band of 11 Bay Area counties, and share snapshots illustrating the contours on a county-by-county basis. Finally, we conclude with recommendations and implications for the broader arts field and the philanthropic sector.

Our methodology included conducting 19 interviews with key traditional artists, organizations, funders, and leaders with significant experience, who we engaged as thought partners and storytellers (Appendix C). We sought out lists and recommendations of artists and organizations across the broad geography from those interviewed, and combined them with the extensive database maintained by ACTA. We reference a select bibliography (Appendix D), which informs our knowledge and perspectives, and index published materials as source documents.

Artists and culture bearers lead collective imagination towards change by convening community members bounded by cultural ways of knowing

II. What are the Folk and Traditional Arts?

The Question of Terminology

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) defines the “folk and traditional arts, which include crafts, dance, music, oral traditions, visual arts, and others, are those that are learned as part of the cultural life of a community whose members share a common ethnic heritage, cultural mores, language, religion, occupation, or geographic region. These traditions are shaped by the aesthetics and values of a shared culture and are passed from generation to generation, most often within family and community through observation, conversation, and practice.”³ Forms as diverse as Ohlone basketry to Japanese koto music, from Oaxacan mask-making to queer voguing competitions, can all be defined as traditional arts embedded within specific tribal, ethnic, regional, or cultural groups.

However, within a broad field that includes cultural practitioners, cultural workers, dedicated nonprofits, state-sponsored departments, and academically trained specialists, there is no consistent nomenclature or terminology to describe the field. In a limited 2018 survey, ACTA found dozens of terms employed in the broader field: cultural heritage; living cultural heritage; heritage; traditional arts; folklife practices, folk and traditional arts; folklife; folklore; cultural traditions; grassroots cultures; folk culture; life, history, and culture; field of folklife studies; cultural sovereignty of Native nations; deeply rooted cultural expressions; collective spirit; and ancestral knowledge, arts, and history, among other terms.⁴

The terms “folklore” or “folk arts,” as descriptions for the work cultural heritage workers do, is used strategically and situationally, and is used less frequently now than in the past. Today, “cultural heritage” or “living cultural heritage” are more common terms.

While some public folklorists have suggested that the fluidity of terminology reflects the fluidity of the work itself, the inability to marshal a common language to describe the field limits its visibility and can impede connections with other people and sectors.⁵ This is an ongoing challenge for both cultural workers seeking to grow the infrastructure of support and for culture bearers themselves, who are working to gain legibility in the public sphere without losing their individual cultural contexts. For the purposes of this report, we will be referring to this field as the field of traditional arts.

Contemporary Practices in Active Communities

“Tradition and innovation are not a dichotomy. They both live within each other and are reliant and dependent upon each other. Innovation cannot happen unless you have a root it can come from. Innovation is about taking what you already have and adding your own flavor to it — your own existence, your own experience and embodiment. Depending on the generation the connection to dance and music can be so different; it is influenced by real life.”

— ESAILAMA ARTRY-DIOUF, artist, director of *Bisemi, Inc.*⁶

In order for traditional arts to flourish, they must be living in the context of a cultural community. A community is defined by a variety of identity markers, including, but not limited to, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, region, language, or affiliation with a particular subgroup, like an LGBTQI community or an occupational community (such as leatherworkers). Traditional arts grow out of a community’s shared standards of beauty, values, life experiences, and collective wisdom, rather than out of some notion of singular genius or innovation attributed to a single pioneering artist.

There are a number of misconceptions about the traditional arts worth addressing: one is that traditional arts are static artifacts that reenact practices from the past and have little or no bearing on the contemporary

era. Rather, the traditional arts are dynamic — they are continually changing and adapting to new settings and circumstances while remaining informed by shared ancestral knowledge. Even those traditions that faithfully seek to replicate practices from generation to generation must adapt to changes, such as environmental shifts that affect source materials — such as roots for basket making — or with pernicious circumstances, such as war or forced migration. The traditional artist is often a community leader, an accountable agent for the cohesion of community values. Exoticizing traditional arts as relics of a romanticized past undermines the value, potency, and relevance of these practices and practitioners in communities today.



One of the Hewlett 50 Commissions made in the folk and traditional arts, Chaksampa Tibetan Dance + Opera Company artists perform in the Ache Lhamo tradition in Richmond, 2022.

Photo: Robertino Fonseca

Traditional Arts Modes of Transmission

It can be helpful to think of modes of transmitting traditional practices in two broad categories that often overlap and blur into one another: informal structures and formal structures. Understanding how practices are taught and learned are insightful pedagogies adding insight into the collective values of a community. These values often intersect within and between secular and spiritual domains, another feature of some traditional arts practices.

Transmission models for traditional art forms vary according to cultural community and may involve formal group classes, one-on-one pairings, or informal learning settings. In some parts of South India, for example, a young person goes to the home of a master musician to learn the tradition. For the first several years, the student will do nothing but sweep the courtyard and run errands for the teacher. The rationale for such training lies in the belief that the student absorbs the sound of the teacher playing and the teaching of the more advanced students, and that this serves as the best foundation for the new pupil.⁷ The efficacy of passive learning while absorbed in other tasks is recognized as an intrinsic part of transmission. Learning traditional arts does not only involve training in

the skills and techniques of the genre art, but also requires experience in the deeper cultural aspects of protocols.

A contemporary version of this transmission today may utilize lessons via Skype with a master artist located in India, where adjusting to time zones and a computer screen have become necessary adaptations for continuity of traditional arts learning.

Informal Structures: Family and Community Learning

Because the traditional arts can be intertwined with the daily cultural life of communities, many of these practices are learned in this manner. Family is among the most common and natural contexts for the transmis-

sion of folk and traditional arts, offering stable, one-on-one, long-term training opportunities for ongoing learning. Another benefit of learning an art form within a familial setting is the simultaneous immersion in the cultural context from which it arises. Family can include hereditary lineages within one family tree, or it can include “adopted” families, constructed between senior artists and their closest disciples who form a lineage outside of bloodlines.



2019 ACTA mentor artist Pierr Padilla instructs wife and apprentice Carmen Román in the Afro-Peruvian courtship dance, Marinera Limeña, in Oakland.

Photo: Julián Antonio Carrillo/ACTA

Traditional arts are also passed through observation, intergenerational storytelling, oral tradition, and immersion in cultural contexts at places outside the family home, such as places of worship or centers for community organizing.

Formal Structures: From Classes to Academies

The most apparent and common formal structure for the transmission of the traditional arts are lessons, courses, and workshops led by artists who teach from settings as intimate as their kitchen tables to community centers, private institutions, colleges, universities, dance studios, competitive academies, and social service agencies. These could be one-off

master classes or workshops, but more often, they are long-term commitments in which groups of students learn a traditional art from a senior artist at an institution or a school run by the senior artist from their home. While these engagements may begin formally, it is important to note that life-long familial relationships between students and teachers often develop, which overlap with the formal structures where they may have initiated. Conversely, teachers/elders and students who may already be training together informally may formalize their relationship by entering into structured programs together, such as a master-apprentice program offered by an arts service organization like ACTA, or by starting a private class through an institution. Fluidity between formal and informal ways of learning and transmitting traditional arts knowledge is common.

III. A Regional Footprint with Broad Impacts

Radical Precedents of Cultural and Racial Identity Movements

Why has the Bay Area offered a prolific environment in which traditional arts can flourish? The answers to this are complex and have to do with a confluence of factors that underlie a basic characterization of the Bay Area — and the state of California — as a place of tolerance and radical imagination for social justice.

The Black Panther movement, established in Oakland in 1966, fomented a cultural shift that mirrors the current climate of Black Lives Matter, richly exemplifying the Bay Area as a touchstone of bold social and cultural movements. Both political movements, decades apart, focus on the expressions of political will and the assertion of people claiming who they are, provoking a shift or destabilization in the environment. If social behavior and cultural expression are soulmates in this process of change, the beginning of a Pan-African consciousness in the 1960s had reverberations that are evident to this day. Expressions that were ascribed to both a real and somewhat romanticized motherland were actively pursued in such practices as drum and dance collectives, clothing and hair choices, name changes to embrace Swahili — all foreshadowing the decolonizing practices that are still being theorized and enacted upon today.

Cultural and racial identities have always been strong rallying points for organizing, and were highly influenced by and in alliance with Black

liberation movements of this time. Successive social movements, such as the American Indian Movement, marked Alcatraz Island as a site of protest and reclamation. Chicano consciousness has been fueled by a generation of unique Mexican American experiences and politicization, marked by memories of police violence at the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles during this time. Concurrently, a growing consciousness among Asian Americans and Jewish American radicalization was also based upon their respective outsider status and a need to push back against race-based hate crimes. Ethnic studies curricula marched into the academy, notably at San Francisco State University, which challenged assumptions regarding whose history is recorded into the canon of knowledge. Collective markers — such as language; shared membership in a cultural, social, or political community; and emerging aesthetics based upon cultural belonging — became rallying points to rediscover social meaning. These attributes of shared belonging also define traditional arts.

The simple act of being oneself continues to be a radical position in our society. For Roy and PJ Hirabayashi, co-founders of [San Jose Taiko](#), the story is quite personal. While they have received the nation's highest honor for traditional arts as National Heritage Fellows (2011), Roy recalls that his motivation to explore taiko was an urgency to know where he came from, fueled by

the turbulent political climate of the '60s. Hirabayashi is a second-generation Japanese American, and his parents spoke little of the family traumas, which included wartime incarceration in the U.S. concentration camp known as Topaz and the death of family members in Hiroshima.⁸ Characteristic to many Japanese Americans, these traumatic experiences were not discussed. The study and practice of taiko created a pathway to organize his community and to express his growing self-assurance. Taiko, as a call to action, is uniquely steeped in the Japanese American experience. Roy and PJ Hirabayashi have changed the



Artists protested the near-eviction of the Alice Arts Center in 2003, successfully leading to the establishment of the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts, an important site for learning African and African diaspora dance and music.

Photo: Bill Hackwell

traditional arts field by asserting identity through the lens of second- and third-generation American experiences. They laugh recalling how taiko was perceived in the early years when they would apply for funding. Was this music? Was this dance? The key funding body in those early years, known as the San Jose Fine Arts Commission, suggested by its nomenclature a steep climb to procure funding for a community-based practice that originated in Japan. Today, over 450 known taiko groups exist worldwide, and the three original groups from California (San Francisco Taiko Dojo, San Jose Taiko, and Kinnara Taiko in Los Angeles) paved the way for communities all over the world to adapt and advance the form. This legacy is steeped in California nurturance.



2011 National Heritage Fellows in Japanese Taiko PJ & Roy Hirabayashi of San Jose.

Photo: Tom Pich Photography

Observations and Provocations through Multiple Lenses

We offer the following case studies to understand dynamics and themes that exist within historic social trends that influence vibrant, living cultural practices. Observations and examples, beginning with California's First Peoples, as well as immigrant and diasporic communities, underscore features of practice and pedagogy that distinguish the field. By looking at these diverse and specific cultural practices, we can begin to extrapolate broader principles and further imagine how culturally specific practices can be more visible in funding, policymaking, or program design.

First Peoples: Native California

The Indigenous peoples of California (known as Native Californians) are the original inhabitants who have lived or currently live in the geographic area within the current boundaries of California before and after the arrival of Europeans. There are 109 federally recognized tribes and at least a hundred rancherias (a Spanish term for small Indian settlements) in the state. With dozens of others that are still federally unrecognized, California is home to the largest population of Native Americans in the country, including people relocating from reservations throughout the United States, due to their displacement from Native territories.⁹

Picturing the rich diversity of peoples who comprise Native California, consider that in pre-contact times, over 300 Native American dialects and as many as 90 languages were widely spoken, making it the most linguistically diverse state in the United States. Today, only about half of those languages are active, according to the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. While the sobering reality of language loss is but one of many examples of cultural extermination, there are many creative and focused artists in Native communities whose work is creating the counter-narrative to culture loss.

Native and Indigenous Artists: Protocols First

“If you think about commissioning a big piece from a Native group they would, by necessity, have to take their own art form and transmute it into a form that doesn’t honor the original intent. And some artists can do that, right? You can make contemporary art that has ties back to traditional art. But if you’re really talking about tradition in which nothing is only performative, where all art forms contain teachings, then it’s inherently problematic, you know?”

— LINDSIE BEAR (Cherokee), vice president of strategy, program, and community solutions, Humboldt Area Foundation/Wild Rivers Community Foundation¹⁰

For many traditional Native artists, the conversion of art into performance is antithetical to its purpose. According to Lindsie Bear, VP of strategy, program, and community solutions at the Humboldt Area Foundation which houses the Native Cultures Fund, the expectation of artmaking as performance is tied to the idea of culture as entertainment. The Native traditional concept of say, song creation or dance or anything that might be analogous to the dominant Eurocentric idea of presentation, is largely at odds with Native American cultural norms and assumptions. To conform within the dominant Eurocentric performance expectations, many Native American cultural



Master basket weaver Dixie Rogers (Karuk, L.) with her 2018 ACTA apprentice in Karuk baby basketry, Julia McCovey (Yurok, Karuk, R.). Dixie is holding a completed baby basket, and Julia is holding roots that will be cleaned and trimmed to become weaving material.

Photo: Shweta Saraswat/ACTA

practices would have to be removed from their original context. There are malignant tropes in the popular imagination that have historically contributed to tokenization and appropriation. An example that has great traction at this time of social and political reckoning is the call by Native peoples to rename major league sport teams whose logos and fan behavior are disrespectful at best, yet this type of commodification is often seen in popular culture until it is challenged.

“But if you’re really talking about tradition in which nothing is only performative, where all art forms contain teachings, then it’s inherently problematic...”

—LINDSIE BEAR, Humboldt Area Foundation/
Wild Rivers Community Foundation

There is complexity in understanding that cultural expressions are Native intellectual property and that context is everything. Bear continues, “So it’s not about ‘here’s a song, you can sing it anywhere.’ It’s about who gets to sing the song? What time of year does it get sung, and who is it sung to? You know, the prayer is in that song. All of those things are part of the intellectual property of that song. To change any one of them changes the meaning of it. You need to have someone who has the right to make those decisions about when any

sort of traditional expression can be shared in a Western way, and there is a really limited number of people who have that right by cultural protocol. Funders often try to make those determinations, dictating audience size, performance timing, and accessibility with grant restrictions, which is wholly inappropriate to Native protocols.”

According to Bear, “there are great traditions of gambling songs, storytelling, and raunchy jokes that are used for entertainment, but these would be gifted or understood as gifts or games.” The reciprocity inherent in understanding that these expressions are gifts is a tenet of cultural life in tribal contexts. This important distinction contrasts to an idea of performance as a more transactional interaction between artist and audience.

To understand how Native worldviews have been put to the test, we need only look at public records that document government-sanctioned policies designed to disenfranchise and annihilate Native American culture, language, practices, and ties to their homelands. While Bay Area Natives are actively rebuilding political and cultural assets, they continue to unpack the generational effects of missionization, federal recognition

policies, and gentrification. This is where their tribal neighbors in the far north of the state serve as a case in point of how the strong revival of traditional practices can help in healing from past harms. These tribes demonstrate that through the cultural specificity of reclaiming language, a critical container is established to propel expressive artmaking. The arts of ritual and daily life, like the design of eel hooks used for fishing or the regalia created for dance season, are related to language revitalization. In Humboldt County, a Karuk language immersion school for youth provides a significant anchor for the community, whose ties to their spoken language was nearly inactive a generation ago. With a



Glenn Moore, Sr. taught his grandson and apprentice, Glenn Moore, Jr. to make a Yurok hand-carved redwood dugout canoe as part of ACTA's Apprenticeship Program in 2006, with involvement from community members.

Pictured is also an archival image of a canoe from Glenn Moore, Sr.

Photos: Sherwood Chen/ACTA

new generation of young people who have grown up bilingually, cultural continuity is strong. A coming-of-age ceremony (lhuk), is now in practice after a dormancy of over 200 years, according to Karuk culture bearer Pimm Allen. World-renewal dances take place seasonally, dance houses are built and maintained, songs are composed and shared. The next generation of culture bearers are actively producing material arts like basketry, regalia, and canoes. Baskets and canoes are considered living and breathing entities, with organs and a body. Additionally, a strong visual arts practice has opened up more genres that continue to reference Karuk, Yurok, and Hupa life in new modalities on canvas and in murals.

Navigating Protocols and Establishing Best Practices for Funders

Because rituals and ceremonies are for the community itself, access to funded work may or may not be possible. This has implications for the idea of “audience,” which is designed into proposals, as well as possible evaluation models that have been in practice by funders.

Aesthetically complex work evident in material objects used for utilitarian or ceremonial purposes — baskets, pottery, eel hooks, and regalia — are understood as living pieces connected to larger principles of cultural life. A question that arises in considering the creation of canoes or regalia or baskets or food is: can we appreciate that these works of high artistic quality are not meant for everyone's gaze? Can we consider a model of support that expands the idea of “audience” to serve and catalyze Native and Indigenous practices that are exclusively for Native peoples? Can we redefine what it means to be members of an audience? Is there room in a commissioning program to change or flip the paradigm of “performing” arts? For the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions, the call to premiere a work was an intrinsic part of the proposal. This might occur through exhibitions, documentation, or by invitation, providing a wide berth of activity to occur for the community itself and some for those outside of the Native community.

How can funders establish best practices to accommodate and support Native work when Indigenous protocols may not lend themselves to site visits or outside evaluators? As art funders consider their own barriers that preclude communities from accessing funds, examining the deliverables and evaluation rubrics must also honor practices that are intended to safeguard a community, without funders insinuating themselves where they do not belong. In other words, we must appreciate the fact that sharing these practices or any object of meaning and beauty must be solely on Native terms. In this regard, the leadership of Native-led organizations, as well as trusted non-Native intermediaries who have established critical engagement with Native cultural leaders, can assist in providing a bridge between cultural conventions and funding accountability.

There are also public facing examples of Native artmaking. Powwows and their California social gathering equivalent, Big Times, are a case in point. A recent exhibit at the Smithsonian looks at the gathering and its multiple manifestations and meanings. “Some American Indians cherish

Jennifer Bates, left, (Central Sierra Mewuk) was a mentor artist in ACTA's Apprenticeship Program in 2011, with her apprentice Jeri Scambler, right, who she taught how to make a traditional het-ta-lu tray used to sift pounded acorn into flour. Jennifer is also a founding board member of the California Indian Basketweavers Association (CIBA).

Photo: Russell Rodriguez/ACTA



the powwow tradition, while others see it spoiled by commercialization and non-Native spectatorship. It can be difficult to discuss powwow as a whole because of its broad meaning and the layers of misrepresentation and stereotypes surrounding it in popular culture. Essentially, powwow is an adaptive, contemporary tradition that reflects tribal and intertribal history, culture, and community values.”¹¹ The nonprofit, [Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits](#) (BAAITS) hosts an annual Two-Spirit Powwow that has become an important event acknowledging gender identity and expression through an Indigenous lens.

Beyond Revitalization: Cultural Practice and Activism in the Bay Area.

Among many Bay Area tribes, there are degrees of strong cultural practice, revitalization, and activism taking place. The San Francisco-based [Cultural Conservancy](#), active for 36 years, links critical ideas of biological and cultural diversity among Indigenous peoples through its

initiatives and work. [Heyday](#), a nonprofit independent publisher established in 1974, continues to be a formidable voice and advocate, having published more than 50 books on California Indian life. Its quarterly publication, [News from Native California](#), is content rich, often profiling arts in context of the community of practice. For Vincent Medina and Louis Trevino, creating the first Ohlone restaurant,

[mak-’amham/Cafe Ohlone](#), based upon a pre-contact diet, has garnered their Berkeley restaurant national attention and opportunities to join a worldwide movement of food justice among other Indigenous peoples.

The [Sogorea Te’ Land Trust](#), led by Indigenous urban women, was born in 2015 to protect sacred burial sites in Vallejo. This legal, cultural, and spiritual pursuit also galvanized the establishment of the nonprofit whose work is dedicated to the repatriation of Bay Area sacred sites



Louis Trevino (L) and Vincent Medina (R) serve up food at their Cafe Ohlone/mak-’amham in Berkeley.

Photo: Courtesy of Cafe Ohlone.

and the institution of a land tax for those who live on Native lands and wish to pay toward reparations. Under the co-leadership of Corrina Gould (Lisjan Ohlone) and Johnella LaRose (Shoshone Bannock/Carrizo), the activism emanating from the land trust is inseparable from practices of ceremony and sacred arts.

“If the goal is to strengthen Native cultural and arts revitalization, then support needs to be given to the kinds of art that are deeply impactful to the community from which it comes.”

—LINDSEY BEAR, Humboldt Area Foundation/
Wild Rivers Community Foundation

Other key touchpoints in the Bay Area include the San Francisco-based [Friendship House](#). While it primarily serves as an addiction recovery center, it is also a space where people across the state get their first introduction to Native culture — art, drumming, sweat lodges, singing, and dancing — while in treatment. While the Friendship House may not show up on the arts funder radar, community members have attributed it to having a huge influence in arts education for community wellness.

Oakland-based [Intertribal Friendship House](#) serves an important social service and cultural function as an “urban reservation” for city-dwelling Native people. They provide ongoing workshops, exhibitions, and classes for unaffiliated Native Americans who learn from one another’s traditions and history. In Marin County, [Alter Theater](#) is primarily Native-led, producing works by Native playwrights and extending the idea of traditional storytelling into contemporary theater. Eduardo “Eddie” Madril of [Sewam American Indian Dance](#) is an enrolled member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe in Southern Arizona, and has lived and worked in the Bay Area for decades, where his hoop dance knowledge is shared through stage performance, international exchanges with other Indigenous peoples, and youth arts education avenues. Collectives like the [California Indian Basketweavers’ Association](#) and the [California Indian Storytelling Association](#), while statewide in scope, include Bay Area culture bearers. Museums — like the [de Young Museum](#), [Oakland Museum of California](#), and the [Museum of the American Indian](#) in Marin County — have also been important partners in commissioning and documenting work.

Bear offers some fitting comments to conclude this discussion, “there are wonderful Native artists and curators making Native arts for exhibition, like the celebrations at Yerba Buena Gardens (Native Contemporary Arts Festival, curated by Janeen Antoine), performances at Indigenous appreciation nights for professional sports teams, or the Indigenous Red

Market in Oakland, sponsored by the [Native American Health Center](#). And those people do have the cultural authority to decide what of their culture to share publicly. However, the audience and intent of those events is primarily to share the culture with outsiders. It is a beautiful offering of education. Public representation does matter to the well-being of Native people. But, it is not primarily those public art events that strengthen and sustain the communities of practice. If the goal is to strengthen Native cultural and arts revitalization, then support needs to be given to the kinds of art that are deeply impactful to the community from which it comes.”

Indigeneity in the Diaspora: Tradition and Tradition-Based Expressions

For diaspora-born artists, connections to Indigenous peoples is no less a feature of identity and personal exploration. This is particularly salient when lineage and history have been interrupted by colonialism and acculturation. The Bay Area Pilipinx community provides an interesting example of this pursuit to understand a pre-colonial identity. Beginning in the 1970s, dance artist [Alleluia Panis](#) (her organization was then known as Kulintang Arts, San Francisco, now KULARTS) brought [Danongan Kalanduyan](#) from the University of Washington as an artist-in-residence for two years to teach the brass gong ensemble music of Muslim Maguindanao. Kalanduyan, who would receive a National Heritage Fellowship award in 1995, and is largely credited with bringing the practice to the West, provided proximity to a culture bearer with his deep knowledge of the context of kulintang practice. This exchange paved the way for Pilipinx American artists to interact with other Indigenous Pilipinx, who are a minority of the largely Catholic island nation.

Cultural immersion exchanges with Indigenous tribes are now actively pursued in order to have direct engagement with elders, explains Eric Solano, artistic director of [Parangal Dance Company](#). The prolific



Portrait of Parangal Dance Company, a Filipino Folk Dance Group based in the San Francisco Bay Area.
Photo: RJ Muna.

company of 45 dancers and musicians tours internationally from their home base in San Mateo County, showcasing folkloric dance suites from the Philippines. Broadening their repertoire to include suites based upon tribal cultures is weighed with responsibility. Solano cultivates elders and culture bearers to advise on appropriate choreography, music, regional dress, and customs. Technology sustains these relationships after in-person visits. When setting a choreography for his company, Solano sends digital rehearsal footage for approval and blessings before mounting work for the stage.

Another significant culture bearer residing in Contra Costa County is Jenny Bawer Young, from the Kalinga tribe located in the mountains of Northern Luzon. A group of Bay Area Pilipinx women established a collective, [Kalingaforia Laga](#), to support Bawer Young’s teaching of traditional Kalinga backstrap weaving. The weavers have created full dance regalia, requiring an understanding of threads, loom usage, and color symbolism that is part of the history of the Kalinga people. Bawer Young is a valued mentor because of her lived knowledge of not only textile arts, but for the rituals, dances, and songs of her people. The [Manilatown Heritage Center](#), in the historic International Hotel ([I-Hotel](#)), is another locus of activity for cross-border exchanges with culture bearers and the continuation of kulintang practice from the lineage of Danongan Kalanduyan.

Pushing Boundaries: Tradition-Inspired Work and Neo-Indigeneity

The exploration of Indigenous roots has another side, which we loosely identify under the concept of neo-indigeneity. By pushing the perceived boundaries of traditions, this work seeks to create new expressions that borrow from Native worldviews and popular culture. Whereas Native and Indigenous practices are grounded in particular contexts and lineages, neo-indigeneity suggests another twist in the evolution of identity-based artmaking, often blurring the lines of traditional and contemporary practices. Unfortunately, this largely tradition-inspired work is mistaken for traditional arts. The work can be problematic in several ways, not least of which is commodification of Native practices, but tradition-inspired work can satisfy the marketplace or call for “new” work, which often drives proposals in arts funding. Because the traditional arts have erroneously been characterized as less dynamic, a crude characterization might see

a traditional artist's work as existing within an endless loop of doing the same thing repeatedly into infinity. While this is an intentionally unrefined characterization, it serves to underscore how the paradigm of “new” or “edge” skews toward a Eurocentric model, prizing perceived innovation as more valuable than a traditional arts practice where innovation also occurs but may not be as evident.



Building Capacity and Creating Opportunities

African and African Diasporic Traditions The Bay Area is home to many African and African diaspora master artists who are alums of state-sponsored dance and music companies in Africa. These government-supported troupes became effective methods of advancing cultural diplomacy, beginning in the late '60s when producers and impresarios still played a significant role in bringing work from abroad to theaters in the United States. These highly talented dancers and musicians toured internationally, representing many ethnicities of the African continent. Performing with these troupes were coveted and highly competitive opportunities for artists.

Two alums trained in this state-sponsored system are Naomi Gedo Diouf and the late Dr. Zakarya Diouf, culture bearers and artists from Liberia and Senegal respectively. They have contributed to the practice and performance of West African dance and drum in diaspora communities for over four decades. [Diamano Coura](#) (or “those who bring the message” in Wolof) West African Dance Company has made Oakland an epicenter for the study for African dance, including traditions from Senegal, Liberia, Mali, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and Gambia. In 2020, they received the coveted National Heritage Fellowship recognition for their contributions. “Mama Naomi” and “Papa Zak’s” eight children and 12 grandchildren join this lineage and are actively involved in sustaining the company as dancers, drummers, and teachers. When Zak Diouf died in October 2021, at age 82, his wife Naomi assumed leadership, and the company’s vitality shows no sign of diminishing.

“Papa” Zakarya Diouf drumming for Diamano Coura west African dance class at the Malonga Casquelourd Center in Oakland., 2018.

Photo: Jennifer Joy Jameson/ACTA.

The malleability of the traditional dance and music repertoire allows Diamano Coura to take on contemporary issues. Diouf has explored these issues through her choreography by using folk stories and morality tales to weigh in on current pressing social issues, such as gun violence, that have impacted urban life in Oakland, as well as the heavy toll of the Liberian civil war, which weighed heavily on members of the Diouf family.

Another way the Dioufs have tilled and nurtured the field is as anchors for other master immigrant artists who model their careers on the trajectory of Mama Naomi and Papa Zak. For 23 years, they have produced a dynamic, four-day dance intensive ending with a culminating evening concert, known as *Collage des Cultures Africaines*. The annual event brings together African immigrant artists who live here and abroad to teach and perform. It is a model replicated across the United States in a network of intensives for serious students. Not only are attendees energized by this infusion of high-level teaching and peer interaction, the guest teachers are able to network and broaden their base of support. These are artists who often live and teach in isolation from one another, so the Dioufs provide a sense of place for this important creative network. Another feature of *Collage* is the opportunity to discuss areas of concern, such as the creation of a standard teaching rubric for diaspora-trained artists who wish to teach West African dance and music.

The [Tannery World Dance and Cultural Center](#) (TWDC), in Santa Cruz, provides another window into the relationships and rewards of working with artists of this caliber. The TWDC has made a commitment to five master artists, who are in residence and teach dance and music of Congo, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, and Senegal as a core part of the center’s programs. Since 2017, TWDC has made it their mission to sustain a dance and cultural space that supports Santa Cruz and Bay Area professional artists, specifically artists who have left their country of origin or have second- and third-generation immigrant experiences that inform their work directly. This support is realized by offering an affordable dance space for teaching, curating performance opportunities that present the artists’ work, encouraging further development of the forms, and providing opportunities for a new generation of students to learn from these artists.

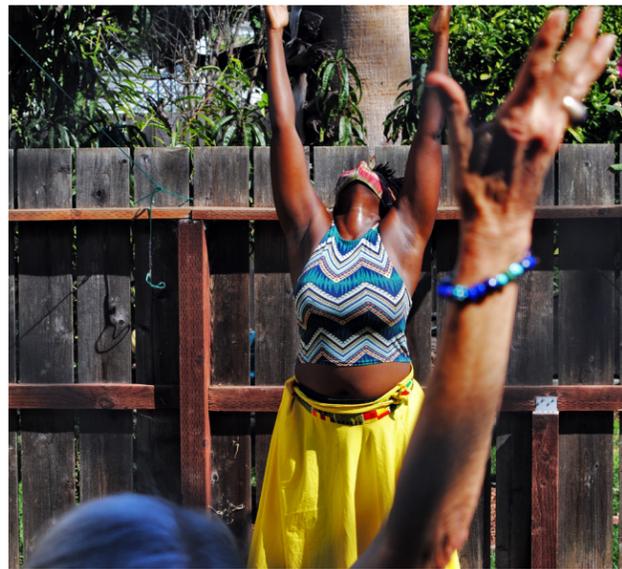
This well-articulated mission addresses a reality that there can be a wide chasm between artistic mastery and the skills and experiences needed to negotiate diasporic life. For many immigrant master artists, regardless of cultural background, who may have spent their formative years supported by state-run performing companies or academies, the gap in artist support in the United States can be paralyzing. In addition to the formidable issues of acculturation, which include language acquisition, navigating bureaucracy and government forms, and understanding

new social norms, many immigrants also encounter the complexity of American racial history as they try to establish their practice. Master artists may find that their artistic and professional status, which once opened opportunities for them in home countries, has limited cachet in the United States. Teaching classes, workshops, and performance becomes a critical lifeline.

Cat Willis, TWDC's founder and former executive director reflects upon the organization's work this way: "When performance happens and is coming from a place of building work

together, relationships grow around that work. Involving the community in the process is really what our organization is about. We are a home. And being a home means that all of these different intersections are happening there."¹²

Mexican and Mexican American Traditions With the largest immigrant population in the state, the folk and regional traditional arts practices of Mexico are abundant in California. For example, there is an astonishingly wide variety of music practices alone — from the well-known Mariachi music of Jalisco, to the highly participatory son jarocho fandangos of Veracruz, to the brass bands or bandas of Oaxaca. National Heritage Fellow [Artemio Posadas](#) of Santa Clara County has taught the son huasteco (along with the son jarocho and other regional forms of son) at Richmond's [East Bay Center for the Performing Arts](#) since 1990, anchoring the growth and understanding of authentic son in the



Dr. Uzo Nwankpa leading a storytelling ritual with The Medea Project for the 2020 ACTA Apprenticeship Program, with mentor artist Rhodessa Jones.

Photo by Dashiell Merrick-Kammis.

greater San Francisco Bay Area. [Los Cenzontles Cultural Arts Academy](#), based in Richmond, is under the leadership of third-generation Mexican American musician Eugene Rodriguez. He has advanced the profile of Mexican master artists like Native P'urhépecha musician [Don Atiliano López Patricio](#), who settled in the Bay Area in the late 1990s, and mariachi musician [Don Julian Gonzalez Saldaña](#). The [Arhoolie Foundation](#), based in El Cerrito, has recorded Mexican, Tex-Mex, and Mexican American music in their continuing [Frontera Collection](#). Mexican farmworkers from Oaxaca traditionally celebrate a festival known as Guelaguetza, which showcases the regional dance, music, and dress of their state. There are at least two Guelaguetza festivals in the Bay Area, including one organized by the Santa Cruz-based organization [Senderos](#), and another in Santa Rosa by [Oaxaca Tierra del Sol](#). These grassroots events have grown over the years, with artists coming from Oaxaca to work with community members, particularly youth, to promote the dances and music associated with the region.

The role of folklorico dance groups is often a window into strong identity formation. A significant statewide and regional network serving folk dancers and artists, based in San Jose, is [Danzantes Unidos](#). Their annual multi-day festival is the largest Mexican folk dance gathering in the United States, with renowned maestros from across the U.S. and Mexico, who gather to teach folklorico workshops designed for all age groups and skill levels. Many universities and colleges have cultural dance clubs, which for some graduating high school seniors is a selling point for applying to certain universities. Additionally, material arts including weaving, altar making, and foodways, animate the Bay Area's Mexican American communities.

South Asian Traditions Formality and organization abound within the South Asian communities from India, where traditional arts find a high degree of support by the government. These arts practices are also reflected in both the social and religious fabric of life. Such a broad statement does not serve the complexity, diversity, or nuances of the



National Heritage Fellow in son huasteco, Artemio Posadas, performs at ACTA's Sounds of California - Mayfair program at the School of Arts & Culture in East San Jose in 2017.

Photo: Lily Kharrazi/ACTA.

South Asian traditional arts world as represented in the Bay Area. The sheer presence and number of training schools situated in and serving the Bay Area for eight classical dance forms alone, and their accompa-

nying music schools, are only a small part of the vibrant picture of cultural life for South Asian communities. One need only to look at [India Currents](#) which is, according to the “San Jose Mercury News,” “the oldest and largest Indian American magazine on the West Coast.”

An important influence in fortifying a generation of artists and cultural leaders came with the establishment of the [American Society for Eastern](#)

[Arts](#) (ASEA) in 1963. Funded by Samuel and Luise Scripps, a confluence of culture bearers, master artists, and hungry-for-knowledge students came together in Berkeley, making the Bay Area a beacon for the study of world arts and culture. Past participants of ASEA acknowledge that a major shift occurred with the arrival of two legendary artists from India, invited to teach at their summer institute: Bharatanatyam legend [T. Balasaraswati](#) and sarod master musician [Ustad Ali Akbar Khan](#). With direct transmission from such high-caliber culture bearers to American students, an embodied practice ignited 16 active years of history at ASEA, which later was known as the World Music Center, moving from Berkeley to San Francisco, and now in San Diego. With a steady stream of invited master artists from abroad, the immersion model was in high gear. The fact that this institute was outside the academy was noteworthy.

Mary Khan, director of the [Ali Akbar College of Music](#) (currently in its 55th year of operation in Marin County) recalls when ASEA brought Ali Akbar Khan to California. “After three summers of meeting dedicated students, he established himself in Berkeley.” Beginning with 50 students (only one being South Asian), his presence and stature would influence the practice of traditional arts for generations in the United States and abroad. He brought artists who advanced and popularized Indian performing arts, including world-renowned percussionist and tabla master [Zakir Hussain](#) and kathak master and National Heritage Fellow (2009) [Pandit Chitresh Das](#). Recalling the history of the college, which moved to



A typical session of teaching and learning between Bay Area mentor artist Vidhya Subramanian,(L), and her apprentice, Kaavya enkataraman,(R), in the Indian classical dance form of bharatanatyam in 2020.

Photo courtesy of the artists.

“a then very sleepy Marin County after the free speech riots and political upheaval made the late maestro feel unsafe,” Mary Khan comments that the school population is now the inverse of how it began. With close to 70% of students now South Asian, this percentage reflects the immigration of an educated workforce from India to Silicon Valley, in search of their beloved arts.

Encapsulating the strength of community practices to cultural life since the heyday of ASEA, and reflecting major immigration patterns from India to California, is the nonprofit [Yuva Bharati](#), with the tagline, “Enriching Life with Performing Arts.” Since 2006, the Santa Clara-based group of 20 volunteers has recorded thousands of hours of Indian classical dance with Bay Area master artists, visiting artists from India and abroad, and emerging local artists. [Swara Lahari](#), the classical music wing of Yuva Bharati, records half-hour concerts, telecast weekly to the San Francisco Bay Area. The organization serves as a strong ecosystem in and of itself through its media presence. That such tech savvy aligns with documentation of centuries-old systems of dance and music does not seem accidental, but underscores a deep understanding of transmission for

future generations. Oral transmission is aided by great advancements of technology, stored in the ubiquitous and metaphorical idea of a cloud.

Chinese Traditions A feature of Chinese diasporic communities in the United States is that lessons and access to study of music, dance, opera, and other arts are available to many, whereas only select people might be tracked and have access to study these arts in China. If one were

selected to train in the arts, they would find support at a high level in their home country, starting at a very young age. In contrast, practices in California offer an on-ramp for study as an avocation, rather than training for a professional track.

A prolific number of Chinese music organizations exist throughout the Bay Area, catering primarily to their own communities. The majority of these schools are in the capable hands of master artists trained



Chinese Cantonese Opera performer Eva Tam and her 2019 apprentice Teresa Luk (front) at Eva's Chinatown studio and opera club in San Francisco.

Photo: Jennifer Joy Jameson/ACTA

by national academies from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Some of these practices include the contemplative tradition of the guzheng (sometimes spelled guqin), by organizations such as the [San Francisco Gu-Zheng Society](#) and [North American Guqin Association](#) in San Mateo County. [California Youth Chinese Symphony](#), in Santa Clara, annually enrolls over a hundred students, who study various instruments, including the dizi, pipa, erhu, sheng, suona, liuqin, zhongruan, yangqin, matouqin, guzheng, cello, as well as percussion. [Aimusic](#), (formerly Firebird Youth Chinese Orchestra) is under the direction of composer and artistic director Gordon Lee. This formidable school in San Jose provides Chinese classical, folk, regional operas (xiqu), musical storytelling (qiyi), percussion, and Buddhist and Taoist court music. The faculty concentrates on traditional music studies and less on the Chinese orchestras imitating Western styles that have been more popular in the last century. There are also courses in Western music at this active center.

Embedded in Oakland, under the artistic direction of Sherlyn Chew, is the [Purple Silk Music Education Foundation](#), whose mission is to make lessons accessible to low-income students. They serve over 700 students annually through outreach programs; for those wishing for advance studies, the Laney College music program (which Chew chaired for many years) affords students further concentration. Chinese opera is a popular and beloved event, with its pageantry, folklore, and star power, particularly for an older generation. In pre-pandemic times, an evening walk through San Francisco Chinatown's narrow streets would reveal music coming from apartment buildings where many small opera membership clubs practice.

IV. Models of Support for Traditional Arts

National, State, Regional, and Local Infrastructures

The support system for the traditional arts at the national level includes three federal programs: the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Folk and Traditional Arts Program, the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Each play distinct, essential, and complementary functions for traditional arts support infrastructure.

Funding for the traditional arts comes in the form of grants for organizations and art projects from the NEA and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), significant cash awards included with the NEA's [National Heritage Fellowship](#) (the nation's highest honor for traditional artists), and research fellowships from the American Folklife Center. Additionally, there are state-level grants from state arts councils and other funding entities.

The entire budget for competitive grants of the NEA Folk and Traditional Arts Program sits around \$3 million per year, and considering it is the only national dedicated stream of funding earmarked for this sector, it is grossly under-invested. Key programmatic assets include the [Smithsonian Folklife Festival](#); the National Folk Festival (implemented by the [National Council for the Traditional Arts](#), a non-governmental organization [NGO]); the National Cowboy Poetry Festival (produced by the [Western Folklife Center](#)); and some strong regional, state, and local-level programs.

The NGOs with a dedicated national scope in service of the traditional arts field include the [American Folklore Society](#), [Local Learning](#), and the [National Council for the Traditional Arts](#). The single dedicated folk

and traditional arts program housed in a regional arts organization (RAO) is at [South Arts](#), serving the Southern region of the country. State traditional arts programs exist in over 40 states, but with significant geographic gaps in a number of states, like Kansas and Colorado, for example, where funding and established programs to reach traditional artists is minimal.¹³ In California, the Alliance for California Traditional Arts (ACTA) was founded in 1997 as an independent NGO to fulfill the NEA mandate

for a state-level program, and was supported by the California Arts Council and the NEA to serve in this capacity.

Despite the established national infrastructure at the federal and state levels, a dedicated national service organization providing comprehensive services, advocacy, communications, or regranting does not exist in contrast to other arts disciplines, such as dance, music, theater, and visual arts based in the European canon, like [Dance/USA](#), or [Theatre Communications Group](#), for example. The field is hampered without these essential functions, masking the sheer volume, scale, and significance of traditional art activity throughout the country, resulting in fragmentation, a lack of communication, and diminished resources for practitioners and communities.

Making the existing infrastructure more visible remains a critical issue. Strengthening a central clearinghouse of information, or “map” that demonstrates how people can connect to the field is needed. Building out the connections to other fields, such as public health, economic development, social justice, and education, could generate significant engagement, new funding, and relevance.



Artist Dandha Da Hora performs at the Lavagem Festival produced by BrasArte, an organization based in Berkeley, dedicated to the traditional arts of Brazil, 2019.

Photo: Lily Kharrazi/ACTA

Getting to Funding: Nonprofits, Budget Thresholds, Bold Initiatives

Through ACTA’s work as a grantmaker, we know that 70% of traditional arts entities with 501(c)(3) nonprofit status operate with annual budgets under \$25,000.¹⁴ We also know through our experience with nearly 2,000 community-based grantees over two decades that those organizations who operate outside of the nonprofit status also operate with exceptional leadership and volunteerism, and all within small budgets. The ability to access funding is often predicated on an organization’s budget size, and on the nonprofit tax status, which has implications for who is eligible for funding in the arts field. This is where the critical role of fiscal sponsors comes into sharp relief with an important function and lifeline for support. Small budgets often translate into a common practice that if leaders and artists pay themselves at all, they are grossly underpaid. Small budget entities are capable of producing deep and impactful work, as much as their larger budget neighbors, but remain undercapitalized. While this may signal the resourcefulness of working with little, it also begs the question: What is possible if traditional arts organizations were funded more amply?

Some perspective on the decades-long proliferation of nonprofits can provide insight into the fact that until relatively recently, the nonprofit model did not serve many cultural communities that were primarily organized at a community level. In fact, most continue outside of this prevailing model. The growth of the nonprofit system has an interesting trajectory that has influenced funding for decades. In a report by arts and philanthropy visionary John Kreidler — formerly with the San Francisco Foundation, whose use of Comprehensive Employment and Training Act ([CETA](#)) funds for hiring San Francisco artists to do community work was the first in the nation — we learn about the grip of the nonprofit model and the evolution of the arts sector into nonprofit compliance. He writes, “In the San Francisco Bay Area, only 20-30 nonprofit arts organizations were in existence in the late 1950s, while a far greater number of theaters, musical ensembles,



Calpulli Tonalehqueh, an intergenerational community group dedicated to Aztec and pre-colonial practices, performs for residents of the Mayfair neighborhood in San Jose, 2017

Photo: Lily Kharrazi/ACTA

performing arts presenters, and galleries were operating on a for-profit basis. By the late 1980s, at the end of the Ford era, the Bay Area contained approximately a thousand nonprofit arts organizations, and far fewer proprietary arts organizations continued to operate.”¹⁵

The use of public monies to further the social and cultural agenda that multiculturalism began is a straight through-line to the efforts of present-day funding initiatives to center artists and communities of color in particular.

The shift from a commercial model to a nonprofit model is in tandem with the social movements described earlier, where representation became the watchword of the times. A radical and vocal move to redistribute arts funding to reflect this plurality was demanded by artists. How these trends affected and shaped the ways in which traditional arts are recognized is a part of the history of San Francisco arts policies in particular. [The San Francisco Arts Commission](#) support for neighborhood cultural community centers characterized this effort. These places of gathering were located in the Mission, Chinatown, the Fillmore, and Castro districts, representing Latinx, Pilipinx, Chinese, Black, and LGBTQI populations, respectively. These intergenerational cultural centers continue to be supported as vital hubs connecting people by culture, ethnicity, race, or shared membership in a community. The landmark establishment of the Cultural Equity Fund, in 1993, came on the heels of public protests. Protestors asked for a course correction to the long-standing bias of a disproportionate amount of public funds going to large-budget, white-led and serving organizations such as the symphony, ballet, and the opera.

The use of public monies to further the social and cultural agenda that multiculturalism began is a straight throughline to the efforts of present-day funding initiatives to center artists and communities of color in particular. The philanthropic sector can only see the tip of the traditional arts iceberg, with only a small fraction of these groups incorporated into the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit model, while the majority of the traditional arts sector functions outside this designation. Thus, recognizing the role of intermediaries and fiscal sponsors is critical to opening doors to support.

The traditional arts sector comprises a variety of models, providing examples of both the successes and challenges of cultural representation. The following examples provide some context.

The Festival Model of Performing Culture

The San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival The [San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival](#) (SFEDF), founded in 1978, was the brainchild of a program officer at the Zellerbach Family Foundation, with support from San Francisco Grants for the Arts. Produced by World Arts West for over 42 years, the festival has become a blueprint for the Bay Area traditional dance ecosystem. The model has also been influential regionally and nationally. Since the late 1970s, the SFEDF has challenged the inequities of arts funding structures in San Francisco in particular, as festival performing artists moved from local community centers to the downtown Herbst Theatre, with its velvet seats and two-tier balconies. Audiences were enthralled by the political charge of imposing Congolese drums on a stage heretofore reserved for chamber music, or by the powerful statement made by Gitana flamenco artist Rosa Montoya when she declined to leave the stage after her 10 allotted minutes because she was “in the moment.” Performances met with wild audience response, quite unlike the accustomed decorum expected by the house ushers. For audiences, the validation that came from inhabiting a white-dominated space, as well as watching dance genres as diverse as they were, was intoxicating. There was power in this representation.



The Arenas Dance Company performs Afro-Cuban repertoire under the direction of Susana Arenas Pedroso and is one of the featured Hewlett 50 Commissions made in the folk and traditional arts in 2021.

Photo courtesy of Dance Brigade.

Anne Huang currently fills the festival leadership spot, the fifth executive director since its founding in 1978. As an émigré of Taiwan and a member of the Bay Area dance community, she understands, from first-hand experience, the limited performance opportunities that festival artists may have.¹⁶ Under her leadership, the Ethnic Dance Festival has instituted technical assistance more broadly to many culturally specific artists that the festival serves, in order to lift this sector up to better compete for funding. As the festival reinvents itself for organizational stability and service, performing in the tried and true showcase platform is a milestone event for many artists and arts workers. Over the SFEDF

history, more than 450 groups have performed on the festival stage, and for many of these soloists and companies, the yearly schedule of public auditions in January and a performance presented to a ticket-buying audience in June, punctuates their annual calendar.

There is no arguing that SFEDF is an important part of the ecosystem for a particular kind of artistic product and opportunity. The five- or 10-minute presentation of world cultures on stage has introduced many audiences to communities and genres they would never otherwise encounter. For artists, the exposure and camaraderie of the festival has forged new collaborations and offered technical and production support that is not available to most community groups. This is where many new artists and companies first interact with a public beyond their own community. The experience of performing at the SFEDF has also encouraged companies to create and model their own home

season, largely based upon the experiences first gained from performing in front of thousands of people.

What is less evident with a showcase model is that stage snapshots often highlight the entertainment and pleasure aspects, reinforcing a “drive-by” appreciation without a substantive introduction to the deeper histories, aesthetics, and lineages. This critical idea of context is a distinguishing tenet of traditional arts, as opposed to “performing culture” that may reference ethnicity. This is often at the crux of confusion regarding what defines a traditional art. Traditional arts are always based in lineage.

A Learning Model:

Pedagogy to Challenge Dominant Narratives

East Bay Center for the Performing Arts “Taxonomy gets in the way,” reflects Jordan Simmons, the recently retired artistic director of the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts (EBCPA). Simmons has had a rich history with a 37-year tenure, first as a student and alum of the program, beginning in 1968, to faculty member in 1978, followed by leadership as executive and artistic director. Located in Richmond, a city that has

“A core understanding is that all human beings have gifts and that cultures have evolved powerfully distinct ways of training, creating and evolving; they represent the potential of the human mind and spirit, none are more traditional or modern.”

—JORDAN SIMMONS
East Bay Center for the Performing Arts

historically been an African American town, and subsequently home to successive waves of Mexican and Southeast Asian communities, the center reflects these waves of historic immigration in its programming and student population.¹⁷ Over five decades, EBCPA developed a curriculum where “we rejected the very notion of distinction between traditional and contemporary or traditional arts, as well as between classical European arts and ‘ethnic’ arts.” Students in the center’s flagship Young Artist Diploma Program explore a rich combination of training methods, representing the diverse heritage found in their communities. They are exposed to the brilliance of world art forms — from Anlo-Ewe (Ghana) dance/drumming and be-bop jazz improvisation to traditional Mexican son, Richmond hip-hop, classical ballet, chamber ensemble, and the radical political theater pioneered by Augusto Boal. Simmons explains: “A core understanding is that all human beings have gifts and that cultures have evolved powerfully distinct ways of training, creating, and evolving; they represent the potential of the human mind and spirit, none are more traditional or modern. When C.K. Ladzekpo plays (Anlo-Ewe music) the music, ideas, and expression he creates is contemporary African music and culture. He is also performing within a tradition, within Ewe aesthetics; his performances contain the elements of all of the above.”

As an artist and educator, Simmons strives to follow a path encouraged by the center, actively studying and performing world music and movement traditions, including the Japanese shakuhachi flute and the Afro-Brazilian martial art of capoeira. These embodied experiences have contributed to his committed belief that we cannot just level the silos that separate genres; we must build radical understanding and respect in order to alter generations of systemic intolerance and destruction. On the policy level, he shares: “Decades ago, we asked the National Endowment for the Arts to redo their taxonomy. At the California Arts Council, we have long advocated to reconsider what quality and artistic standards really mean across the range of art practiced in our communities. We have advocated for public education to address hands-on arts engagement within a broader context of human potential, and to explore how the gifts of all children find opportunities to flourish in every school and neighborhood. In this sense, it is just as natural to study



C.K. Ladzekpo, master Ewe drummer is lead artist with the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, one of ten Hewlett 50 Commissions made in the folk and traditional arts in 2021.

Photo courtesy of East Bay Center for the Performing Arts.

classical African drumming as Mozart at East Bay Center. They are both diaspora forms in this society.”

EBCPA provides a pedagogy and practice that reinforces the belief that world music traditions, including Eurocentric practices, are comprehensive and complex. This positioning is important in changing the narrative of whose art expressions matter.

A Model of Local Spaces: Depth and Breadth

Los Cenzontles Cultural Arts Academy Teaching youth is core to the mission of Los Cenzontles, as is offering a space for youth to deeply explore varieties of Mexican roots music and multi-genre artistic expressions. Their work in this culturally specific area has provided important bridging opportunities in the scale and reach of their work, both within and outside their community. The academy is located in the working-class city of San Pablo. It would be easy to drive by the strip mall storefront and never know that Los Cenzontles (“the mockingbirds” in the Indigenous language of Nahuatl) is an industrious and creative music center offering more than 20 classes per week. They are also a music ensemble, with a discography of over 20 recorded albums, Grammy nominations, and collaborations with major recording industry artists like David Hidalgo of Los Lobos, Linda Ronstadt, and Jackson Browne. Their mission to “amplify Mexican roots in the Bay Area and beyond” is achieved by producing original music, videos, and educational tools. “We teach classes to hundreds of local youth in traditional Mexican music, dance, and arts and crafts. We host many popular community events throughout the year. Locally, we are a second home for many families and we are a long-standing leader in the Mexican roots revival here in the United States,” states their website.

Established as a nonprofit in 1979, the active community space for youth and families is a hub for Latinx musicians and is an active recording academy. It was founded by Eugene Rodriguez, a Mexican American and conservatory-trained classical guitarist, whose own exploration of musical roots led to the creation and direction of the prolific nonprofit.

Los Cenzontles is an example of a successful, intentionally localized, traditional arts cultural center whose work recognizes and is propelled by the desire of immigrant and diaspora-born Mexican Americans to know more about the specificity of regional music of Mexico. Through

music collaborations, Los Cenzontles has popularized and made visible the diverse practices and peoples that constitute Mexican roots music. Among its successes has been the engagement of a community who sees itself reflected in the academy’s well-produced recordings, videos, and concerts.

The throughline for multifaceted Los Cenzontles is transmission, evidenced by the young people who participate in after-school classes in guitar, violin, Mexican regional dance, or in folk arts, and multi-generational community events, like Dia de los Muertos, that bring San Pablo residents together in observance. Transmission is also at the core of well-produced recordings, like *Cuatro Maestros*, that have expanded the repertoire in concert with accomplished Mexican regional artists, including Santiago Jiménez, Jr. (tejano conjunto); Andrés Vega of Grupo Mono Blanco (son jarocho); Julián González (traditional mariachi); and Atilano López Patricio (P’urhépecha son abajeño). Imagine how inspiring it is for the six-year-old musicians to witness the same academy teacher who encourages their self-expression through zapateado or folk songs, dressed in gorgeous hand-embroidered traditional clothing, garnering thousands of views on YouTube or in a documentary on local PBS television affiliates. Self-esteem stories abound.

V. Recommendations

“My worry is about creating structures in which we expect community-specific cultures to adapt to the non-profit structure. And that to me is problematic. It almost has to be the other way around, which is why I employ kids from the neighborhood. What Los Cenzontles has done has only been possible because we hire kids from the neighborhood. It’s easier to teach a kid from the neighborhood how to do administrative practice functions than it is to hire a professional administrator to understand community values.”

— EUGENE RODRIGUEZ, musician, executive director
of Los Cenzontles Cultural Arts Academy¹⁸

The Hewlett 50 Arts Commission program was conceived and designed to celebrate the performing arts, which takes many of its standards from the Eurocentric arts canon. We have recommended that the Hewlett 50 Arts Commission take a broad and flexible approach for the traditional arts, which prioritizes community definitions, practices, values, and needs for supporting this field. These are recommendations that follow from our experience and report. Readers can extrapolate and tailor these recommendations to their own situations.

Art Forms

- Acknowledging and understanding the intertextual and holistic practices of traditional arts, commissions should encompass

performing arts traditions in music and dance, but also inclusively embrace material culture, foodways, and oral traditions as they relate in community contexts.

- Acknowledge that traditional arts are living and breathing practices that are, by definition, dynamic, never static. They offer a way to look at legacy, histories, and the influence of place through practices that are current. This dynamic is what makes these expressions powerful and relevant to group identity and audiences who may encounter them.
- Examine the idea of “new work.” For traditional arts, this may mean not only the creation of new repertoire but may also mean taking a work to scale, reinterpretation of time-honored traditional work by next-generation artists, new collaborations, new research, and/or interfacing with new audiences or communities.
- Native California Indigenous artists are well served if the commissioning process recognizes the important role of material culture and other expressive culture typically understood outside the performing arts model. Material arts could include a public sharing component, where possible, or documentation to be shared only as appropriate on the terms of the community.

Venues

- Understanding the “where” of traditional arts — situated in community contexts by, for, and about community, and not necessarily made for staged presentations — can open the commission up to multiple possibilities of where these projects can unfold, such as community sites, festival spaces, social dances, etc.

Who are the Beneficiaries?

- Acknowledge that there may be tension between “in-community” and “broader public” regarding who comprises an audience. In-community commissions should be valued as much as works designed for the “general public.”

Priorities and Values for Designing a Traditional Arts Commission

- Clearly define that the call for commissions prioritizes traditions rooted in community vs. tradition-inspired work that may only borrow or reference a cultural community.

- Lineage matters. Who have lead artists learned from? Who are the culture bearers informing the proposal?
- Lead with a broad concept of what is “new” in the traditional arts.
 - “New” could mean making a new object, like a redwood canoe, or composing new decimas (verses) or corridos, within a traditional form.
 - New collaborations between artists.
 - Taking work to a new scale.
 - Work that is informed by fresh research.
 - International travel possibilities — studying with a master and integrating learnings into new work.
 - Consider what is new in the context of community-defined relevance (new compositions of Tibetan opera that last shorter durations, or incorporating new expressions, like spoken word/rap, appealing to a younger generation).
 - Distinguish between fusion and innovation. Fusion may refer to when genres or forms are fused into a new combination, while a traditional arts commission focused on innovation would maintain the integrity of specific traditions in exploring something new. We are not calling for fusion.

Investment and Longer-Term Impacts

- A trajectory of two-to-three years could be beneficial, encouraging a planning period.
- Include funds to encourage documentation of the work, where appropriate, for videography or other modes of recording.
- Encourage longer-term benefits: Can sustainability be a desired result of the commission on traditional artists and their communities? (Consider building in funding to support documentation, transmission, infrastructure for collaborations, repertoire, capital expenses of instruments, regalia, backdrop, or lighting.) Several interviewees have commented on the large size of the commissions, and the field needs to build capacity or sustain capacity. One funder suggested allowing grantees to allocate some part of the budget for a cash reserve.

Advocacy and Field Building

- Does the commission program offer an opportunity to document and publish on the impacts of this work — as advocacy to philan-

thropy — about what can happen with substantial investments in the traditional arts field.

- Encourage proper wages for artists and collaborators to signal equity to the larger arts field.

Applicant Considerations and Supports

- Consider an organizational budget threshold for applicants that is lower than \$100,000. Often smaller organizations demonstrate greater capacity than is tracked on a balance sheet when volunteers and in-kind assets are considered. Smaller organizations represent a large part of the traditional arts field and they thrive and sustain themselves on little outside funding, yet should be prioritized as prospective commissioning entities. Furthermore, traditional arts organizations, overwhelmingly led by people of color, have not received a fair share of the arts funding — as a result, their growth and potential for greater impact has been stunted.
- Consider building in additional supports from consultants to assist in project administration and fiscal sponsorship. A funder might contract with a few different consultants who could offer bundled services for accounting or project management, for example, that grantees could self-select to engage.
- There will likely be a need for fiscal sponsors, and there could be a need for more assistance in identifying appropriate sponsors for prospective lead artists and organizations.
- Consider a role for experienced intermediaries to serve as fiscal sponsors or project administrators for more than one project. For example, a group like Los Cenzontles regularly works deeply in regional Mexican immigrant communities to present or support community programming. Other groups like Asian Improv Arts, the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, or Creative Sonoma could also be suited to serve such a role.

VI. Conclusion

One of the heralding features of the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions in Folk and Traditional Arts has been a charge to the field to dream big and to utilize a relatively large award budget of \$150,000 to this end. The response from the field did not disappoint and produced an unprecedented number of remarkable proposals from a vibrant yet under-resourced sector. An innovative and informed choice to lower the organizational budget eligibility criteria to \$50,000 vastly opened up the commissions to the field. This highly impactful decision, made in direct response to the needs of the sector, was further amplified with the option for organizations or community groups to apply with a fiscal sponsor if they did not have 501(c)(3) nonprofit status. In previous rounds of the commission, the organizational budget threshold was set at \$100,000, in sync with the better-resourced fields of music, theater, dance, and movement-based performance.

While this report began as a landscape scan and inventory of traditional arts activities and key culture bearers in 11 Bay Area counties, we also selected key historical events and policies that have shaped the field, as we know it today. By diving into culturally specific case studies and models of community organization, our goal was to underscore that a broad and flexible approach in the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions grant design would be most fruitful. It is our hope that this approach can be a model toward nurturing the expansive field of traditional arts practice in the Bay Area and beyond.

Based on ACTA's 25 years of fieldwork and experience as grantmakers and advocates, we have had the opportunity to interview artists, funders, and service providers to elicit their first-voice experiences, which contributed greatly to this report.

Traditional art practices ask us to inhabit worldviews, to experience meaning in aesthetic languages and spoken languages that may not be our own. These arts practices are often surprising artistic inventions of cultural communities to bind and hold people together through time. They are embedded with codes of conduct to promote actions and behavior, to reflect upon nature, or to simply bring pleasure and repose. We know that the commissions can signal the power of the traditional arts as a beacon of cultural plurality, creativity, and community well-being beyond the Bay Area zip codes. We are grateful to the Hewlett Foundation for the foresight and leadership they have exercised in making these commissions a reality for this field.

Appendix A.

Bay Area Cultural Communities and Their Art Forms

Community is the unit of organization in traditional arts — artistic practice is rooted in community experience. Art genres do not necessarily exist in strict disciplinary boundaries and often interconnect. There are hundreds of communities and art forms in practice across the 11 Bay Area counties. Below are some of the major source communities of the wide array of traditional arts expressions. This list is by no means exhaustive, but illuminates the wealth of practice that we know exists in the region.

In addition to the Native American communities who are the original stewards of place, traditional arts practices were brought to the region by immigrants or migrants at different points in time and have taken root in the Bay Area. There is much nuance between practices that originated in home countries and those that are practiced here. The listing below calls out the geographic origins of a selected segment of present Bay Area traditional arts practices. A few organizations or artists are noted as examples in parentheses.

Native California Tribes of the Bay Area

- **Alameda:** Chochenyo Ohlone
- **Contra Costa:** Chochenyo Ohlone
- **Marin:** Graton Rancheria, Coast Miwok, Ohlone
- **Monterey:** Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation — Esselen, Carmelino, Monterey Band, Rumsen, Chalon, Soledad Mission, San Carlos Mission (Carmel), and Costanoan Mission Indian
- **Napa:** Patwin, Graton Rancheria, Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Southern Pomo
- **San Francisco:** Muwekma Ohlone
- **San Mateo:** Ramaytush Ohlone, Amah Mutsun

- **Santa Clara:** Tamien Nation Ohlone, Amah Mutsun
- **Santa Cruz:** Awaswas Ohlone, Amah Mutsun
- **Solano:** Patwin, Wintu, and Suisun
- **Sonoma:** Coast Miwok, Pomo, Graton Rancheria

We know that many Native Californian traditional practices are for the Native community itself, without a broader public component or sharing, and can consist of:

- **Sacred ceremonies** including dance, songs, percussion, regalia
- **Storytelling**
- **Material arts** including basketry, instrument making, jewelry, abalone work (Organization: California Indian Basketweavers' Association)
- **Foodways, acorn foraging, plant knowledge** (Organization: Cafe Ohlone)

Native American

Includes U.S. intertribal communities and their practices:

- **Powwow** dance, drum, regalia (Artist: hoop dancer Eduardo “Eddie” Madril; Organization: Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirit Powwow)
- **Visual art** (Native Contemporary Arts Festival at Yerba Buena Gardens)

African Diaspora

- **West and Central Africa:** Senegal, Liberia, Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria, Congo, Burkina Faso, Mali
 - National dance and music repertoire (Artists: Naomi Gedo Diouf, C.K. Ladzekpo, Alseny Soumah; Bongo Sidibe; Organizations: Diamano Coura, Fua Dia Congo)
 - Griot culture (Artist: Ousseynou Kouyate; Celebration: Nuit du Bazin)
 - Popular music/dance genres of urban Africa (Organization: Afro Urban Society)
- **South Africa:** Zimbabwe
 - National dance and music repertoire (Organization: Chinyakare Ensemble)
- **East Africa:** Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Kenya
 - Community celebrations (Organizations: Ethiopian Community and Cultural Center [Oakland], Ethiopian Community Services [San Jose], Eritrea Community Center [Oakland])

Afro-Latino

- **Peru, Brazil, Colombia**
 - Dance and music repertoire (Organizations: De Rompe y Raja, La Cumbiana Colombiana, Chavalos Danzas por Nicaragua, Comparsa Colombiana Vive Mi Tierra, Cunamacué)
 - Social and popular music, e.g., samba (Organizations: Fogo Na Ropa, Grupo Carnavalesco Cultural, Sambaxé, Ginga Brasil)

- Festivals (Organizations: Lavagem Festival by BrasArte)
- Martial arts societies, e.g., capoeira (Organizations: Capoeira Arts Foundation, ABADÁ Capoeira SF, International Capoeira Angola Foundation, Capoeira Mandinga)

Afro-Caribbean

- **Trinidad, Tobago, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haití**
 - National dance and music folkloric repertoire companies (Organizations: Cuba Caribe, Rara Tou Limen)
 - Festivals, e.g., Carnaval San Francisco (Organizations: Mas Makers Massive, Sistas-Wit-Style)
 - Social dance and music (Artists: Susana Arenas Pedroso, Roberto Borrell, Ramon Ramos Alayo (Organization: Bomba y Plena Workshop)
 - Sacred practice, e.g., Lucumí music, dance (Artist: Bobi Cespedes, Organization: Omnira Institute), and material arts, e.g., altars, beadwork

Asia

Pacific Islands

- **Hawaii**
 - Hula: dance, chant, music, Indigenous knowledge, language (Organizations: Academy of Hawaiian Arts, Hālau O Keikiali'i, Hālau KaUaTuahine, Holistic Honu Wellness Center, Nā Lei Hulu I Ka Wēkiu, Kumu Hula Association of Northern California)
 - Kapa bark cloth making (Artist: Kumu hula, Kaua'i Peralto, Organization: Bay Area Kapa Making/Dalani Tanahy)
- **Samoa**
 - Traditional dance, liturgical song (Organization: Samoan Community Development Center)
- **Maori / New Zealand**
 - Traditional dance, music, tattoo (Organization: Māori Mo Ake Tonu)
- **Tahiti:**
 - Dance, music, regalia making (Organizations: Tahiti Fete of San Jose, Te Mana O' Te Ra, Ka Ua Tuahine Polynesian Dance Company)

East Asia

- **China**
 - Music: classical orchestra (Organizations: Purple Silk Music Education Foundation, Aimusic, Chinese Performing Arts Foundation, North American Guqin Association)
 - Opera: (Organizations: Cantonese Opera Association - Silicon Valley, Chinese Kunqu opera)

- Dance: classical (Organizations: Peony Performing Arts, Chinese Performing Arts of America), lion dance, dragon dance
- Festivals, Chinese New Year
- **Japan**
 - Dance: Bon Odori festival dance (Organization: Ito Yosakoi Dance Group), Okinawan traditional dance (Organization: Miyagi Ryu Ohtori no Kai USA)
 - Music: gagaku, shakuhachi, shamisen (Artists: Shirley Kazuyo-Muramoto, Melody Takata) Organization: Berkeley Buddhist Temple, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts,); taiko (Organizations: San Francisco Taiko Dojo, GenRyu Arts, Mui Ghent Taiko, San Jose Taiko, Watsonville Taiko)
- **Korea**
 - Korean dance (Organization: OngDance Company, Artist: Kyoungil Ong)
 - Music, percussion, pungmul (Organization: Korean Youth Cultural Center)
- **Tibet**
 - Festivals, Tibetan Losar or New Year (Organization: Tibetan Association of Northern California)
 - Folk music and dance (Organization: Chaksam-pa Tibetan Dance and Opera Company)
 - Folk opera
 - Material arts, woodcarving, altars, sand mandalas
- **South Asia (India)**
 - Classical dance of North India, kathak (Organizations: Chitresh Das Institute, Leela Dance, Noorani Dance, Tarangini School of Kathak Dance)
 - Classical dance of South India, bharatanatyam, kuchipudi (Organizations: Abhinaya Dance Company of San Jose, Nava Dance Theatre, Kala Vedika, Kalanjali Dances of India)
 - Other classical dance, Odissi (Organization: Jyoti Kala Mandir College of Performing Arts, Artist: Vishnu Tattva Das)
 - Bhangra (Organizations: Duniya and Drum Dance Company, Mona Khan Company)
 - North Indian or Hindustani music and vocal traditions (Organization: Ali Akbar College of Music, Artists: Swapan Chaudari, Zakir Hussein)
 - South Indian or Carnatic instrumental and vocal traditions (Artists: Anu Sridhar, Asha Ramesh)

Southeast Asia

- **Cambodia**
 - Cambodian classical dance (Artist: Charya Cheam Burt Organization: Cambodia American Resource Agency)
- **Laos**
 - Lao folk opera

- Regional music, Lao lam song
- Festivals, Lao New Year (Organization: International Lao New Year Festival)
- Material arts, Mien embroidery (Organization: Asian Community Mental Health Services), Lao weaving
- Foodways, gardening (Organization: Peralta Hacienda)
- **Philippines**
 - Music, rondalla string ensembles (Organization: LIKHA-Pilipino Folk Ensemble), Maguindanao kulintang (Manilatown Heritage Foundation, KULARTS), Pinoy hip-hop, liturgical music
 - Dance, regional dance repertoire based on national performance company Bayanihan, (Organizations: Parangal Dance Company, LIKHA-Pilipino Folk Ensemble), folk dance clubs at universities
 - Material arts, Indigenous weaving practice (Organization: Kalingafornia Laga, Hinabi Project), parol making (Organization: Bayanihan Community Center)
- **Vietnam**
 - Classical music (Artist: Vân-Ánh Võ), Organization: Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center
 - Dance (Artist: Danny Nguyen)
- **Indonesia**
 - Gamelan ensembles from Bali, Java (Organizations: Gamelan Sekar Jaya, Pusaka Sunda, Gadung Kasturi, Gamelan X)
 - Puppetry (Organizations: ShadowLight Productions)

Europe

- **Ashkenazi Jewish** klezmer music (Organizations: Veretski Pass, KlezCalifornia), sacred vocal music (Artist: Sharon Bernstein), storytelling (Artist: Joel ben Izzy)
- **Hungary**, vocal and instrumental folk music (Artist: Ferenc Tobak), Organizations: Eszterlánc Folk Ensemble, Valdama
- **Poland**, dance and music (Organization: Lowiczanie Polish Folk Dance Ensemble)
- **Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Bulgaria:**
 - Festivals (Celebrations: Tamburitza Festival of Mandolins, Evening of Bosnian Sevdah, St. Kiril and Methody Bulgarian Music and Dance at the Croatian Cultural Center)
 - Music (Organization: Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble)
- **Greece:**
 - Greek folk dance and music (Organization: Minoan Dancers)
 - Greek foodways, festivals in fall through Orthodox churches
- **Ireland:**
 - Irish dance and music schools (Organization: Kennelly School of Irish Dance)

- **Spain**
 - Flamenco (Organizations: Bay Area Flamenco Society, Carola Zertuche at Theatre Flamenco, Yaelisa at Caminos Flamencos, La Tania Flamenco Dance)

Latin America

- **Mexico** (all states, especially Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Oaxaca)
 - Regional music and dance, mariachi, son jarocho, banda, Tierra Caliente big harp, ballet folklórico (Organizations: Los Lupeños de San Jose, Los Cenzontles Cultural Arts Academy, Esperanza del Valle)
 - Regional festivals, Oaxacan Guelaguetza, Mayan Vaquerias (Organizations: Senderos, Asociación Mayab)
 - Sacred festivals: Virgen de Guadalupe, altars, processions, danza, liturgical music (Organization: Calpulli Tonalehqueh)
 - Regional foodways
 - Material arts: textile arts, papel picado, ceramics, regional dress, altars, cartoneía (Arists: Herminia Albarrán Romero, Rubén Guzmán)
- **Central America** (Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador)
 - Social dance and music
 - Regional music, protest music, nueva canción
- **South America**
 - Andean music (Artists: Colectivo Anqari, Eddy Navia, Sukay)
 - Chilean dance and music (Organization: Araucaria Dance Group)
 - Bolivian dance and music (Organization: Bolivia Para el Mundo)

Middle East / Central Asia

- **Afghanistan**
 - Music (Artists: Ustad Farida Mahwash, Homayoun Sakhi)
 - Dance (Ballet Afsaneh, Tara Pandeya)
- **Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan**
 - Uzbek percussion (Artist: Abbos Kosimov)
 - Azerbaijani kamancheh (Artist: Imamyar Hasanov)
 - Tajik dance/Central Asian dance (Artists: Tara Pandeya, Aliah Najmabadi, Sharlyn Sawyer with Afsaneh Arts and Culture Society)
 - Tajik music (Artist: Maruf Noyof)
 - Kazak storytelling (Organization: Silk Road House artists)
 - Mongolian paper cutting, dance (Organization: Silk Road House artists)
- **Turkey**
 - Kurdish Alevi music (Artists: Özden Öztoprak, Isik Berfin Ozsoy)

- **Arabic-speaking countries**
 - Palestinian dabke (Organization: Al-joothor Dabke Troupe)
 - Music of the Arab world (Organization: Zawaya, Artists: Faisal Zedan, Lammam Ensemble)
 - Arab cultural festival (Organization: Arab Cultural Center and Community Center)
- **Iran**
 - Persian calligraphy (Organization: Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California, Artist: Arash Shirinbab)
 - Classical music and vocal (Organization: Diaspora Arts Connection, Artist: Mahsa Vahdat, Atabak Elyasi)

United States

- **African American**
 - Creole zydeco music (Artists: Queen Ida, Andre Thierry)
 - Oakland-style blues and jazz (Artists: Sugar Pie DeSanto, Faye Carol)
 - Rap, hip-hop, spoken word
 - Sacred music, gospel (Organizations: Friends of Negro Spirituals, Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir, Glide Memorial Ensemble)
 - Visual and material arts: quilting (Organizations: African American Quilt Guild of Oakland)
- **Anglo American**
 - Folk music and dance, old time music (Organizations: Berkeley Old Time Music Convention), bluegrass
- **LGBTQI+**
 - Drag performance (Organizations: Queer Cultural Center, OASIS SF, House of MORE!)
 - House Ball performance
 - Queered performing traditions (Organizations: Barbary Coast Cloggers)
- **Mexican American/Chicano**
 - Visual arts, murals (Artists: Juana Alicia, Daniel Galvez)
 - Festivals, Day of the Dead, procession, altars (Celebrations: Fruitvale community celebration, Parada Ultima San Jose)
 - Music, protest music, Tex-Mex/conjunto, Chicano rock (Artists: La Familia Peña-Govea)
- **Occupational Communities**
 - Ranching (Organization: Oakland Black Cowboy Association), agriculture

Appendix B.

Regional Snapshots of Counties:

Alameda, Contra Costa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara,
Santa Cruz, Solano, Marin, Monterey, Napa, and Sonoma

“Geographic diversity is easier to achieve in the traditional arts field; there are many bright spots for potential outreach.”

— FRANCES PHILLIPS, *Creative Work Fund and Walter and Elise Haas Fund*⁹

The snapshots below are an annotated review highlighting organizations, artists, and key information that characterize each county. Conversations with leaders at the county level are particularly helpful in recognizing potential for engagement with the cultural communities in their areas of service. An inventory or census at the grassroots level would be useful to uncover pockets of traditional arts activity that simply do not exist in most arts databases, which are largely dependent upon artists who self-identify their work to arts service organizations. With the 2020 U.S. census information available, we recognize this new information provides insight to understand where populations are settling.

Alameda County is home to over 1.5 million people living in 14 incorporated cities as well as in six unincorporated communities and rural areas including Alameda, Albany, Berkeley, Dublin, Emeryville, Fremont, Hayward, Livermore, Newark, Oakland, Piedmont, Pleasanton, San Leandro, and Union City. The unincorporated communities are Ashland, Castro Valley, Cherryland, Fairview, San Lorenzo, and Sunol.

The county is also home to many strong traditional artists and supporting organizations. African and African diaspora forms are thriving and proliferating. Key organizations are the [Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts](#), which houses dance and music classes taught by master artists. [Laney College](#) has a strong program in African dance performance, as does Berkeley High School. These sites are also important theaters rented for performances. [Bisemi Foundation](#), Inc. provides mentoring and grants to support this important sector. Newer immigrant communities

like the Eritrean and Ethiopian communities host New Year celebrations that draw people from all over the Bay Area to celebrate in public parks.

African American arts groups include [Friends of Negro Spirituals](#), [Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir](#), and the [African American Quilt Guild Oakland](#). Spiritual traditions based in Yoruba-based religion animate the work of the [Omnira Institute](#), which illuminates connections between African American culture and African roots. Jazz artists like [Faye Carol](#) reflect an Oakland sound, as do jazz clubs and Oakland-style hip-hop. The Hyphy Festival, formerly held in the downtown streets of Oakland, is now defunct but was indicative of the vibrancy of the hip-hop scene. [The Betti Ono Gallery](#) and Regina Evans's retail and performance space formerly known as Regina's Door are examples of creative storefronts located in downtown Oakland with strong social justice agendas animating their curatorial visions. The [Oakland Museum of California's](#) Friday Nights programs, with exhibitions, food trucks, live performances, dancing, and DJs, have transformed the museum into a lively indoor/outdoor community space. The [EastSide Arts Alliance](#) has long been a strong site of support, with theater space, fiscal sponsorship, and leadership in East Oakland. The [Black Cultural Zone](#) (also in East Oakland) has, since 2014, worked with local citizens, organizations, and churches expressly to assure an African American presence remains in this gentrifying area, and includes an open-air market with cultural activities.

Asian immigrant populations and Asian Americans are served by the [Oakland Asian Cultural Center](#), with classes, exhibitions, performances, screenings, space rentals, and fiscal sponsorship. Newer communities include the Mongolian community, who offer weekly dance classes popular with youth. Chinese opera and karaoke clubs are found in the Cultural Center's spaces above the retail markets of Chinatown. [Peralta Hacienda](#) in the Fruitvale district has played a key role with Cambodian and Mien communities, hosting New Year celebrations in early winter and gardening and foodways that attract immigrant women in the area. [Banteay Srei](#), a program of [Asian Health Services](#), is designed to serve the needs of young women in the Southeast Asian community, providing support to youth who are at risk of sex trafficking. One component of their program centers traditional foodways as a means to bring young women and elders together to cook and tell stories. The [Korean Community Center of the East Bay](#) is another important anchor in the county, offering drum and dance classes.

Cultural spaces like [La Peña Cultural Center](#), [Ashkenaz Music and Dance Community Center](#), [BrasArte](#), [Freight and Salvage](#), [EastSide Arts Alliance and Cultural Center](#), Malonga Casquelourd Center, [Mahea Uchiyama Center for International Dance](#), and the [Silk Road House](#) are anchors for many Bay Area cultural communities that use these spaces for classes, workshops, and performance venues. The [Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California](#) has promoted arts in a more public way since 9/11 to help promote tolerance and culture exchange. Notably, *Calligraphies in Conversation* was a curated program in 2013 by master artist Arash Shirinbab,

who brought together Jewish, Christian, and Iranian calligraphy to the mosque. They have expanded their support for artists to include filmmakers and musicians.

Presenters like [Cal Performances](#) at UC Berkeley consistently curate international performing arts concerts and conduct outreach programs to the community when tours allow for that engagement. There are many culture clubs on UC Berkeley's campus that practice dance and music like Mexican folklorico, Bhangra and Bollywood dances from India, and Pilipinx students who produce an annual culture night. The International House on campus is another location that figures into the landscape of practices.

Traditional artists and organizations frequently rent venues like the [Humanist Hall](#), [St. John's Presbyterian Church](#), [The Julia Morgan Center for the Arts-Berkeley Playhouse](#), and [Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archives](#). City-run parks for festivals such as the [Himalayan Fair](#) or street closures for the Fruitvale neighborhood [Dia de los Muertos](#), produced by the Unity Council, brings more than 10,000 people to the events and are critically important to cultural communities. Lake Merritt is the central location and focus for drumming practices, rehearsals, and general conviviality.

Contra Costa County is the northernmost part of the East Bay. It is largely suburban and includes Antioch, Brentwood, Clayton, Concord, Danville, El Cerrito, Hercules, Lafayette, Martinez, Moraga, Oakley, Orinda, Pinole, Pittsburg, Pleasant Hill, Richmond, San Pablo, San Ramon, and Walnut Creek.

In the words of Jenny Balisle, the newly appointed director of the [Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County](#), the county "is the forgotten stepchild of the region." Contra Costa was recently awarded a CARES grant of \$14,000, which constituted their first-ever grants program in the county of 1.1 million people. The county is land-rich but its arts infrastructure is not particularly strong, so each city in the region funds its own discrete projects, like a theater program for youth in Moraga or the [Blackhawk Museum](#).²⁰ Case in point: The city of Richmond has annually budgeted \$60,000 to grant to local artists through the [Richmond Arts Center](#). More bright spots of activity and support in Richmond include the [East Bay Center for the Performing Arts](#), [Los Cenzontles Cultural Arts Academy](#), and the [Tibetan Association of Northern California](#), which are exemplary leaders with a long-time commitment to traditional arts. The [Latina Center](#), a social service agency in Richmond, uses cultural arts as a central program for family well-being.

[Chaksam-pa Tibetan Dance and Opera Company](#), based in El Cerrito, is the only performing arts entity of its kind outside Tibet. This is an internationally significant organization for the continuity of this long-honored tradition, and is greatly under-recognized. [Gadung Kasturi Balinese Dance and Music](#), under the direction of culture bearer Kompiang Metri Davies is based in Richmond.

In Pleasanton, [Cheza Nami Foundation](#) is a newer nonprofit organization, under the leadership of Kenya-born Catherine Ndungu-Case, that is reaching corners of the county with many East African artists who are newer immigrants to the area. In Concord, [Diablo Japanese American Club](#), housed at the Japanese American Religious and Cultural Center, features taiko, judo, kendo, ikebana, and language classes.

A few notable master artists in Contra Costa County include Naomi Gedo Diouf, who along with her late husband Zakarya Diouf, are the founders and artistic directors of [Diamano Coura West African Dance Company](#). In 2020, they received the National Heritage Fellows award for their work. Other county master artists include Kumu Hula and Native Hawaiian language instructor Kau'i Peralta, of [Halau 'O Kawainuhi](#); Nadhi Thekkek, artistic director of [Nava Dance Theatre](#), a strong bharatanatyam company of second-generation artists; and Gabriela Shiroma, artistic director of [De Rompe y Raja Cultural Association](#), a Peruvian dance and music company. A long-standing Tahitian dance and music company is based here, [Te Mana O Te Ra](#), which is under the four-decade leadership of Lisa and Ray Aguilar. The [Macau Cultural Center](#) has been in existence for over 60 years.

Venues include community centers, outdoor public spaces, public libraries, or large institutions like the [Leshner Center for the Arts](#) in Walnut Creek, which is largely a presenting house for tours, ballet, and symphony.

In the **County of San Francisco**, with its historic Chinese and Filipinx immigrant groups, cultural communities have moved away as economic or personal aspirations dictate relocating. San Francisco has been a longtime immigrant resettlement site and newer populations from Yemen now intermingle in the Tenderloin, near the commerce district known as Little Saigon, which was named in recognition of the previous large immigration population (Vietnamese) to arrive and take up residence in the neighborhood.

What remains salient for Bay Area artists of all genres is that venues, arts organizations, presenters, and services such as fiscal sponsorship entities are primarily based in San Francisco. The Bay Area's arts infrastructure is heavily concentrated in the City and County of San Francisco, even if the artists who produce art have been priced out of San Francisco in droves and relocated to other counties. Having an SF office (even if you do not live in the city) does position organizations for funding through Grants for the Arts and/or the San Francisco Arts Commission. Performance spaces for rent are in demand and often include services for artists. Of note are [Dance Mission Theater](#), [SOMArts Cultural Center](#), [CounterPulse](#), [Bindlestiff Studio](#), [Red Poppy Art House](#), [African American Art and Culture Complex](#), [Bayview Opera House](#), [Croatian American Cultural Center](#), [Museum of the African Diaspora \(MoAD\)](#), [Yerba Buena Gardens Festival](#), [Asian Art Museum](#), [Fort Mason Center for Arts and Culture](#), [Cowell Theater](#), and [ODC Commons](#). The [Presidio Theater](#) is the newest venue, joining the Cowell

Theater in the Marina. Important allies for traditional artists have been [World Arts West](#), the producers of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, [Carnaval SF](#), and [Women's Audio Mission](#), who have recorded many world music artists as part of their training program. Fiscal sponsors such as [Asian Improv Arts](#), [Dancers' Group](#), [Intersection for the Arts](#), [Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center](#), and World Arts West are critical to the entire sector. What has been largely deficient for the whole arts sector is addressing language and literacy needs of immigrant artists.

San Mateo County San Mateo County comprises 20 incorporated cities and towns, which include Atherton, Belmont, Brisbane, Burlingame, Colma, Daly City, East Palo Alto, Foster City, Half Moon Bay, Hillsborough, Menlo Park, Millbrae, Pacifica, Portola Valley, Redwood City, San Bruno, San Carlos, San Mateo, South San Francisco, and Woodside. The county has wide economic diversity with some of the highest real estate values in the nation.

San Mateo County is notable for its large industries that are as wide ranging as the San Francisco International Airport — known for its strong curatorial art exhibits in their sprawling terminals which often feature traditional arts — to the headquarters of biotech and social media giants, Genentech, Facebook, and YouTube. The county has open green areas of parks, trails, reservoirs and nearly 60 miles of coastline with natural marine preserves and state park beaches that protect the coastal ecosystem. A 35-year tradition, [Fog Fest](#) in Pacifica, captures how weather factors are celebrated along the coastal communities.

Agriculture has a strong immigrant story here. Latino workers, concurrent with the trends in California, have replaced the agricultural work force of some of the earliest Japanese and Italian immigrants. These flower farms and nurseries provide wholesale goods to the San Francisco Flower Market and beyond. The county is a destination spot each October for pumpkin and food festivals in and around Half Moon Bay, reflecting the seasonal yield of these lands.

According to the U.S. census demographics of 2020, 59% identified as White, 30% Asian, 24% Latino, 2.8% Black, and interestingly, 38.7% White, not Hispanic or Latino. This category includes European Americans, Middle Eastern Americans, Central Asian Americans, and North African Americans. These statistics provide a window into the diversity of communities that reside in the county. This particular demographic has established a number of cultural bright spots in the county, which begin to surface where traditional and folk arts practices are to be found. They include the [California Kurdish Community Center](#), [Hungarian Heritage Festival](#), and the [Persian American Society](#).

Because San Mateo County is uniquely between San Francisco and the Silicon Valley, many residents are commuters who travel to neighboring counties for employment. In an interview with Robin Rodricks, director of the San Mateo County Arts Commission, she said that

although the county is rich with potential arts participation, many people will travel either to Palo Alto (for Stanford Lively Arts) or to San Francisco to experience more mainstream arts.²¹ Yet, the demographics and cultural communities of the county yield more possibilities for traditional arts practices that would benefit from a deep asset mapping process. Some cultural organizations of note in San Mateo County are [Hālau o Keikiali'i](#), under the direction of Kumu Hula Kawika Keikiali'ihwahiwa Alfiche. The [Kaululehua Hawaiian Cultural Center](#) in South San Francisco provides classes in ukulele, hula, and related arts. The [North American Guqin Association](#), under the direction of culture bearer [Wang Fei](#) in Belmont, is also involved in active transmission to students, as well as creating programs for the wider public through the San Mateo Public Library system. The [San Mateo County History Museum](#) has hosted Lunar New Year events. [Farah Yasmeen Shaikh](#), Kathak artist and culture bearer, maintains a strong solo career, touring internationally as well as teaching students locally through the school [Noorani Dance](#). The [Kalashree Foundation](#), dedicated to Indian classical music is a volunteer-run organization. Eric Solano, artistic director of [Parangal](#), a Pilipinx dance company, tours widely from the Bay Area while maintaining an active presence with culture bearers in the Philippines. The [San Mateo Japanese American Community Center](#) was incorporated in 2003.

[Manakin Theater and Dance](#), while primarily ballet-based, serves a diverse population typical of East Palo Alto. The organization has added Mexican folklorico to their youth classes, reflecting the neighborhood youth interests. One of the oldest performing ensembles is [Raíces de México](#), founded in 1980, which also serves the Latinx community. [Fua Dia Congo](#), while headquartered in Oakland, provides high-quality youth and adult dance and drum classes in San Mateo County. Akoma Arts, a collective of artists fiscally sponsored through the [San Jose Multicultural Artists Guild](#), provides African diaspora music and dance arts education.

Commercial clubs and bars also play a role in creating communities of practice for Afro-Latino social dance and music in particular. The [Vinyl Room](#) in Burlingame hosts a weekly salsa night, while [Alberto's](#) in Mountain View offers salsa, merengue, reggaeton, and bachata practices.

The San Mateo Unified High School District [Theaters](#) offer six venues, ranging from small to large well-appointed theaters, available for rent to the public. These theaters also speak to the arts curriculum in the county schools. Other venues include [Foothill College](#), [Fox Theatre](#), the [San Mateo County Event Center](#) at the fairgrounds.

Santa Clara County, in the South Bay, consists of the cities of Campbell, Cupertino, Gilroy, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Los Gatos, Milpitas, Monte Sereno, Morgan Hill, Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose, Santa Clara, Saratoga, and Sunnyvale. The diversity in this county is staggering and unexplored by most of the county's funding ecosystem. The county is characterized by pockets of traditional practices that are thriving and primarily focused within their

own communities. Public-facing events, such as festivals, are ways in which to encounter many of these communities.

With wide economic diversity, the county is home to established Mexican and Mexican American communities with the [School of Arts and Culture at the Mexican Heritage Plaza](#) playing a significant role for traditional arts practices. With a theater, multipurpose room, and a large outdoor plaza, it has been a hospitable and welcoming venue for many cultural communities to use for concerts or festivals. At its core, however, is their commitment to the Latinx communities in the increasingly gentrified neighborhood of Mayfair. Folklorico, mariachi, foodways, and a long-running Dia de los Muertos observation are strong markers of this important venue. They are also an important incubator of talent, and provide critical services like fiscal sponsorship. [Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana \(MACLA\)](#), while a contemporary art space, is an ally to traditional artists, and is a presenter and venue of note.

The substantial presence of South Asian communities is covered elsewhere in the report, and contributes greatly to the traditional arts practices of the Bay Area. Other notable efforts include the relatively new and welcome nonprofit [Mosaic America](#), which is creating cross-cultural platforms for many traditional practitioners, as well as a fellowship program and services. A look at the resources at [San Jose Indian Community](#) will provide a window into community arts, festivals, and services.

A short distance away from the School of Arts and Culture is the area of Little Saigon, with a full commercial corridor including the [Viet Museum](#). San Jose has the largest population of immigrants from Vietnam in the state, following the end of the war in 1975. Regional food is noteworthy. Populations from India, Taiwan, Israel, and Iran have significant presence due to their ties to the technology and academic sectors. Community organizations, such as [Chinese Performing Arts of America](#) and [Ai Music](#) offer robust programs for youth; the [Oshman Family Jewish Community Center](#) has a theater venue and open spaces used by multiple communities; [Korean American Community](#) is a non-denominational service provider for an estimated 10,000 residents, according to their website. [Ethiopian Community Services](#) is the Bay Area center for services and sponsors major New Year's festivities for this large émigré population. The [Silicon Valley African Film Festival](#) is under the direction of Chike Nwoffiah, who is an important cultural leader in the traditional arts field.

Venues and distance seem to keep people within their own neighborhoods. The [Cubberley Community Center Theatre](#) in Palo Alto is a popular rental for Indian classical concerts. [DeAnza College](#) provides venue rentals, as do [San Jose State University](#), [Evergreen Valley College](#), [MACLA](#), and the [Oshman Family Jewish Community Center](#).

Santa Cruz County is composed of Aptos, Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, Brookdale, Capitola, Davenport, Felton, Freedom, Los Gatos, Mount Hermon, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley, Soquel, and

Watsonville. The county has long been a site of settlement, largely due to the agricultural communities in Watsonville. Japanese and Mexican growers and fieldworkers have a generational presence in the area. Additionally, as a university town, Santa Cruz has also been hospitable to world arts and cultures with ethnomusicology and cultural anthropology departments of note. Outside of the academy, the [Tannery World Dance and Cultural Center](#) is a vibrant site for dance and has, since 2017, made a commitment to support five artists in their Diaspora Performance Project, focusing on the African diaspora. Important art organizations for the county include the [Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History](#); [Japanese Cultural Fair](#); [Watsonville Taiko](#); folklorico company [Esperanza del Valle](#); and [Senderos](#), who works with the Indigenous Oaxacan population to provide music and dance classes, and interacts with artist communities in Oaxaca in an exchange program each year.

Solano County is the farthest Northeastern county of the Bay Area. Cities include Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Vallejo, in addition to the unincorporated areas. According to 2019 census estimates, the population is 14% African American, 27% Latino, 1% Native, 1% API, and 60% white; 20% are foreign born and 32% are veterans.

The [Solano County Arts Council](#) plays a critical role in connecting the far reaches of the county through its programming, and provides fiscal sponsorship. Vallejo is the largest population center, hosting a sizable Pilipinx population. [Eliseo Art Silva](#), a well-regarded muralist whose work depicts Pilipinx themes, is a resident, as is historian Mel Orpilla, who has authored books on Pilipinx history in California. The community has begun to organize festivals and public celebrations, according to Carmen Slack, executive director of the Arts Council.

Other Vallejo pockets include the [Hillcrest Baptist Church](#), known for its gospel choir; the [Bodac Cultural Group](#), led by Ghanaian master drummer Benjamin Ofori; and Ebbydan African Arts, a retail space with handicrafts and clothing imported from the continent. Active and popular, [Moon Azteca Ballet Folklorico](#) performs throughout the county, and folklorico classes are taught through the [Greater Vallejo Recreation District](#).

However, venues are scarce and the once public Vallejo Performing Arts Center is now under private ownership. Performances or gatherings have been held in public buildings such as libraries, schools, and recreation centers, as well as in commercial spaces like breweries and wineries on Mare Island. The Friday evening Art Walk has been hospitable to the Ohlone Drum Group, who reside in the county, as well as to local jazz and gospel music ensembles.

Venues and community spaces are more readily available in Vacaville. The [Vacaville Performing Arts Theatre](#) is city-owned. It has a presenting season that includes touring artists. The programming is largely curated to mainstream audiences, and it is the home of the local symphony orchestra and ballet. [The Northern California Chamorro Club](#), representing the Indigenous people of Guam, is based in Vacaville.

Benicia is a small area on the Carquinez Strait with lots of arts activities, particularly for visual arts and studio crafts. It is unclear if there are traditional or folk arts included in this community. There is long history of Portuguese settlement in Benicia. The Holy Ghost Parade takes place on the fourth Sunday in July by Benicia's Portuguese community. The festival starts with a parade to St. Dominic's Church, followed by [Mass](#) and an auction and a dance. The Holy Ghost Parade celebrated 100 years in Benicia in 2007.

Marin County includes Belvedere, Bolinas, Corte Madera, Dillon Beach, Fairfax, Forest Knolls, Greenbrae, Inverness, Lagunitas, Larkspur, Marshall, Mill Valley, Nicasio, Novato, Olema, Point Reyes Station, Ross, San Anselmo, San Geronimo, San Quentin, San Rafael, Sausalito, Stinson Beach, Tiburon, Tomales, and Woodacre.

The county is one of rich green space and markers such as Mount Tamalpais — a sacred site for the Indigenous peoples of the protected coastlines of Point Reyes. Small communities host pockets of artists and organizations who live and practice inside and outside the county. Marin is home to the [Ali Akbar College of Music](#), marking 55 years of continuous teaching and practice of North Indian music. [Swapan Chaudhuri](#), master tabla artist, plays a significant role in teaching and direction of the school as well as the sons of the late maestro and next generation musicians, Alam and Manik Khan. [The Museum of the American Indian](#) culture bearer Eduardo "Eddie" Madril and his [Sewan American Indian Dance](#); as well as Native-led [Altar Theater](#) are located there. [Afsaneh Arts](#), promoting Central Asian performing arts, has had more than a three-decade history in introducing Bay Area audiences to these forms. Next-generation Central Asian dance artist and Fulbright scholar [Tara Pandeya](#), also based in Marin, had opportunities with Afsaneh and is recognized internationally for her artistry. Percussionists include [Vince Delgado](#); [Susu Pampanin](#); and internationally recognized tabla master artist [Zakir Hussein](#). The Skywalker Ranch is home to Skywalker Sound, where Grateful Dead percussionist Mickey Hart has launched world music collaborations and recordings that have included locally based traditional musicians.

[The Minoan Dancers](#), a 30-year-old folkloric dance and music ensemble, is affiliated and sponsored by the Nativity of Christ Greek Orthodox Church in Novato, and is highly respected for their study and performance of Greek regional dance, particularly that of Crete. Kumu Hula Shawna Ala'pai directs the group [Na Pua O Ka La'akea](#) in traditional Hawaiian hula and protocols. The [Multicultural Center of Marin](#) (formerly Canal Welcome Center), is focused on the day laborer populations from Mexico and Central America. Under the leadership of Douglas Mundo, the center includes a strong community group of Mayan immigrants who teach and perform their Indigenous dance and music. This organization continues to be a strong center of traditional arts activities, coupled with social services, in a model that we recognize strengthens future practice for the next generation.

Venues that provide classes or have presenting seasons include [Dominican University of California](#), [College of Marin](#), the [Osher Marin Jewish Community Center](#), and the [Marin County Fairgrounds](#). Classes and workshops take place at the [Roco Dance Studio](#) in Mill Valley and the [Dance Palace](#) in Point Reyes. Flamenco arts in pre-pandemic times were popular in some county restaurants, providing freelance artists in the larger Bay Area with steady work.

While Marin County registers as one of the wealthiest in California, pockets of low-income residents live in subsidized housing in Marin City and in the northern reaches of the county, homes to a large work force, many from Central America and Mexico, as well as other Asian immigrants.

Monterey County is a large territory extending north from Moss Landing and borders San Luis Obispo County. Its towns and cities include Aromas, Big Sur, Bradley, Carmel, Carmel Valley, Castroville, Chualar, Gonzales, Greenfield, Jolon, King City, Lockwood, Marina, Monterey, Moss Landing, Pacific Grove, Pebble Beach, Salinas, San Ardo, San Lucas, Seaside, Soledad, and Spreckels. It is home to some of the most iconic and pristine coastlines of Big Sur and Carmel, and is the entryway into Pinnacles National Park.

The county's First Peoples include [Amah Mutsun Tribal Band](#) and the [Esselen Tribe of Monterey County](#). Artist and culture bearer [Linda Yamane](#) (Rumsien Ohlone) is a prolific basket weaver who has received national and international attention for reviving and creating new work, long dormant among her nation. The county is home to the legacy of John Steinbeck, who memorialized the area through literature. [The Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center](#) is a highly regarded language immersion center that harkens to the days of its association with the now-closed military base of Fort Ord. The famed Monterey Jazz Festival, California Roots Reggae Fest, Salinas Rodeo, and countless tournaments, like the Pebble Beach Golf Classic, animate the county and attract tourism.

The defining presence of the county is agribusiness and farming, which speaks to the large number of Mexican and Central American immigrants who make up the farm labor work force. According to the [Migration Policy Institute](#), 89% of people who work in Monterey and San Benito counties are from Mexico, including those who are classified as unauthorized. On closer examination, we know that many of these itinerant workers are Indigenous Oaxacans who speak multiple Native languages, in addition to Spanish. In the farming town of Greenfield, a group of Indigenous Triqui teach their young girls how to weave using a backstrap loom, gathering each Sunday (their only day off during the harvest season), to sit together and learn the techniques from their mothers and elders. The boys and men play and learn brass band music. The town has had very little in the way of art offerings until recently, when [First Night Monterey](#) extended their programming beyond their New Year's Eve fete in Monterey proper to Greenfield, where an arts studio for youth was established. In other parts of the county, where Mexican workers

have more stable employment, folklorico and son jarocho groups have emerged to serve both youth and adults. The [Alisal Center for the Fine Arts](#) in Salinas is an important hub.

Other immigrant and ethnic groups that have established organizations suggest that culture and language are principle drivers of places of belonging. They include: the Mexican Heritage Group of Salinas, [Samoan Club of the Monterey Peninsula](#), Salinas Chinese School, [Monterey Bay Chinese Association](#), [Tonatiuh Danzantes del Quinto Sol](#), [Xolon Salinan Heritage Foundation Inc.](#), [Monterey Korean American Culture Center](#), [Festival Santa Catarina](#), and the [Filipino Community Organization Monterey Peninsula](#).

Napa County has wide economic diversity connected to its famed vineyards, with a workforce that primarily tends to the businesses of tourism and farming. Cities include American Canyon, Angwin, Calistoga, Deer Park, Napa, Oakville, Pope Valley, Rutherford, Saint Helena, and Yountville.

Christopher DeNatale of the [Arts Council Napa Valley](#) recently identified two organizations with a wide reach throughout the county: the [di Rosa Center for Contemporary Arts](#) and [Nimbus Arts](#), which both have community-based outreach and programming (di Rosa provides one bilingual Spanish/English section of their website). Culturally focused groups included the First Peoples of the [Suscol Intertribal Council](#) and the community resource center [Puertas Abiertas](#) for the Latino communities. Southern Napa, also known as American Canyon, is less organized and connected more closely to Solano County, where residents can more easily commute to Sacramento, San Francisco, or East Bay work locations. It is, however, the most diverse in demographics, with Pacific Islander, Pilipinx and Native residents, which suggests there may be more traditional arts activity to uncover with additional fieldwork and outreach efforts. North Napa, near Calistoga, tends to affiliate with Sonoma County and has a considerably smaller population.

Venues include the [Napa Valley Performing Arts Center](#) at Lincoln Theater, [Performing Arts Center at Napa Valley College](#), select wineries, and public libraries.

Sonoma County is home to nearly 500,000 residents. The county comprises these cities and towns: Annapolis, Bodega, Bodega Bay, Boyes Hot Springs, Camp Meeker, Cazadero, Cloverdale, Cotati, Duncan Mills, El Verano, Eldridge, Forestville, Fulton, Geyserville, Glen Ellen, Graton, Guerneville, Healdsburg, Jenner, Kenwood, Monte Rio, Occidental, Penngrove, Petaluma, Rio Nido, Rohnert Park, Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, Sonoma, Stewarts Point, Sea Ranch, Valley Ford, Villa Grande, Vineburg, and Windsor.

Its economy is primarily based in agriculture and tourism. Demographically the county records show the population is about 70-75% white, 24% Latino, with single-digit segments of Asians,

Blacks, and Native Americans. The Latino population is rapidly increasing and represents between 40%-50% of the school age children in the county, with their parents making up the majority of the county's farm labor. Latinos are projected to be the majority by 2050. The Native Peoples of Sonoma County are Pomo, Coast Miwok, and Wappo.

[Creative Sonoma](#) serves as the county's arts agency, housed within the Economic Development Board. In 2020, they published a [Benchmark Study](#) of arts and culture, which collected data on how the arts sector has contributed to the regional economy in a robust fashion with significant growth in the last 10 years. Of the 160 arts groups who participated in the study, 19 reported to be culturally specific organizations, the majority of which serve the Latino population who are close to 25% of the population, according to demographics cited in the study. While the non-profit arts ecology does not show many traditional arts organizations with over \$100,000 in their annual operating budgets, there are robust Latino-serving social service organizations, such as [Latinos Unidos del Condado de Sonoma](#) and [Los Cien](#), who engage with arts and culture and may be in a position to act as an intermediary, fiscal sponsor, or commissioning organization for funding opportunities like the Hewlett 50 Arts Commissions. Some of the key traditional arts organizations include the [Raizes Collective](#), working at the intersection of Latino arts, culture, and environmental justice, and based in Santa Rosa; and [Oaxaca Tierra del Sol](#), which presents an annual Guelaguetza festival of traditional arts from the eight Indigenous regional Oaxacan groups. There are folklorico dance groups that practice regional Mexican dance repertoire, musical trios, mariachi, and bandas, who perform at familial celebrations, restaurants, and civic events. The [California Indian Museum and Cultural Center](#) in Santa Rosa is a location of note, as well as the [Cloverdale Rancheria](#) of Pomo Indians, who have supported a traditional dance group and regalia making. Sebastopol has been the site of a major festival of Roma culture by the nonprofit [Voice of Roma](#). An annual festival, also in Sebastopol, supports an active bluegrass and folk music scene, and a folk music society holds regular jam sessions. The 30-year-old, annual [Cotati Accordion Festival](#) features many traditional music genres utilizing the instrument including such diverse ones as conjunto, zydeco, tango, Azerbaijani classical, and European polkas. The Boys and Girls Clubs across the county are another strong network for youth arts engagement. Churches are also a locus of traditional arts activities and are another potential community asset to engage with. [Charya Burt Cambodian Dance](#) is located in Windsor and home to a significant culture bearer who, while based in the county, travels internationally to promote and preserve classical Khmer dance knowledge. Another strong culture bearer who resides in Santa Rosa, [Vishnu Tattva Das](#), is a respected guru of Odissi, one of India's classical dance forms. He teaches and performs with his company, Odissi Vilas, throughout the wider Bay Area.

Some venues for performing arts include the [Luther Burbank Center for the Arts](#) in Santa Rosa and the [Green Music Center](#) at Sonoma State University. There are dozens of festivals on the annual seasonal calendar such as the [Apple Blossom Festival](#), and smaller wineries who

employ artists. With the prevalent history and living agricultural and ranching activities, there is a ripe opportunity to explore artistic expressions that are rooted in occupational traditions, including foodways.

Appendix C.

Interviews Conducted by ACTA

Stella Adelman, *Managing Director, Dance Mission Theater, San Francisco*
Esailama Artry-Diouf, *Executive Director, Bisemi Foundation, Inc., Oakland*
Jenny Balisle, *Managing Director, Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County*
Lindsie Bear, *Vice President of Strategy, Program, and Community Solutions, Humboldt Area Foundation/Wild Rivers Community Foundation*
Vanessa Camarena-Arredondo, *Program Officer, Akonadi Foundation, Oakland*
Christopher DeNatale, *President and CEO, Arts Council Napa Valley*
Anne Huang, *Executive Director, World Arts West (producers of the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival), San Francisco*
Kristen Madsen, *Director, Creative Sonoma, Santa Rosa*
Douglas Mundo, *Executive Director, Multicultural Center of Marin (formerly Canal Welcome Center)*
Rachel Osajima, *Director, Alameda County Arts Commission*
Frances Phillips, *Program Director, Arts and Creative Work Fund, The Walter and Elise Haas Fund, San Francisco (retired 2021)*
Eugene Rodriguez, *Executive Director, Los Cenzontles Cultural Arts Academy, Richmond*
Robin Rodricks, *Executive Director, San Mateo County Arts Commission*
Farah Yasmeen Shaikh, *Founder and Artistic Director, Noorani Dance, San Mateo*
Jordan Simmons, *Artistic Director, East Bay Center for the Performing Arts, Richmond (retired 2021)*
Carmen Slack, *Executive Director, Solano County Arts Council*
Eric Solano, *Artistic Director, Parangal Dance Company, San Mateo*
Cat Willis, *Founder and Former Executive Director, Tannery World Dance and Cultural Center, Santa Cruz*

Appendix D.

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