

KQED

San Francisco Wants You to Volunteer in the Arts this Summer

by Adrienne Blaine

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It's no secret that the arts community in San Francisco has been fighting an uphill battle against rising costs and shifting culture, and this summer could mark a turning point in the battle. Where will you be? Hopefully not on the sidelines.

If you plan to fight the good fight, join the ranks of these community-oriented organizations working tirelessly to keep art on the streets and culture in the city. This is not just about preserving San Francisco's art scene but contributing to its constant growth and evolution as well. From daily operations to special events, the art world runs on (wo)man power. Those with and without prior arts knowledge *need* apply.

All of the major San Francisco museums have volunteer programs, choose to work at SFMOMA, de Young Museum, Legion of Honor, Contemporary Jewish Museum, Museum of the African Diaspora or the Asian Art Museum, to name a few.

One fun way to volunteer – and see great music, dance and theater is to become an usher. The San Francisco Opera House has a program that serves both the city's opera and ballet. At San Francisco Symphony you can usher or even audition to add your voice to the chorus. Or if you love theater, usher for the American Conservatory Theater. And those are just the big dogs. Street, music, and food festivals also depend on volunteers to keep costs down; their activities often generate funds for local charities.



San Francisco Community Music Center

Mission District Branch: 544 Capp St., SF

Richmond District Branch: 441 30th Ave., SF

Established in 1921, SFCMC is the oldest community arts organization in the Bay Area. It offers affordable music classes to any and all San Francisco residents. The center's mission is to "make music accessible to people of all ages, musical levels, and financial backgrounds." In addition to providing music lessons, the center puts on concerts with

local musicians and hosts fundraising events that require ushers, photographers and videographers.

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“The San Francisco Community Music Center is looking for people who are up for anything, whether that be learning new skills or interacting with the public,” says Marketing Director Sonia Caltvedt.

If you have a passion for music and are ready to fulfill this ongoing need for volunteers, you could assist thousands of local students and concert-goers of all ages.



Garden Party on July 19, which is expected to draw large crowds for a luminous art exhibit between 9pm and midnight.

SOMArts

934 Brannan St., SF

With only five regular staff members, SOMArts relies heavily on volunteer support for their events, which often feature 20 to 80 artists at time and as many as 800 attendees in their large gallery space.

“Volunteers are integral to sustaining this vibrant community of artist,” says Jess Young, SOMArts Communications Director.

Each year, SOMArts volunteers contribute over 2,500 hours installing, gardening, documenting, coordinating and more. June’s call for volunteers presents enticing opportunities for the National Queer Arts Festival early this month and a community gardening day on June 28. SOMArts is also seeking after-dark volunteers for their annual **Night Light: Multimedia**



Southern Exposure

3030 20th St., SF

This non-profit organization supporting artists across disciplines offers exciting summer events for attendees and volunteers alike. In the month of June, five artists will explore hidden waterways from forest to bay for their **Off Shore** exhibit, which will require the help of adventuresome volunteers. Then on July 11, SoEx will require a small army of helpers for the gallery’s biggest annual fundraising event, the **Monster Drawing Rally**.

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Choose from a wide variety of volunteer positions for the opportunity to work with over 120 artists as they take one-hour shifts drawing side-by-side. Help visitors purchase completed drawings, with all proceeds going to SoEx programs. These volunteer opportunities are open to, "anyone who wants to be a part of the arts community," says Sarah Hotchkiss, SoEx's Communications and Outreach Director and fellow KQED Arts blogger.



Counter Pulse Mission St., SF

This multi-use space has a no-one-turned-away-for-lack-of-funds admission policy. Volunteers help make this policy and low-cost resources for artists a reality. According to its website, "Counter Pulse is building a movement of risk-taking art that shatters assumptions and builds community. We provide space and resources for emerging artists and cultural innovators, serving as an incubator for the creation of socially relevant, community-based art and culture." In the month of June, Counter Pulse will host events as part of This is

What I Want, the fifth annual performance festival about desire. On July 30-31, the space hosts Girlfly, a group of 15 innovative girls performing their own dances. Aside from event volunteers, the facility also needs people to lend a hand around the theater and office.



Courtesy Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Yerba Buena Alliance

735 Market St., SF

[Volunteer Information](#)

The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts is aptly named because it seems to be at the center of SF's art happenings this summer. With programs that extend throughout the city and bay, [Yerba Buena Alliance](#) connects art venues in an impressive network. On June 7, this network came to life for the [Yerba Buena Art Walk](#), which includes 12 galleries and institutions.

Virginia Grandi, Yerba Buena Alliance's Executive Director, is looking for help every month for [Third Thursdays in Yerba Buena](#), which encourages members of the community to explore connected galleries and museums after work by providing discounts and special events.

A quick search of [Volunteer Match](#) yielded opportunities to work at the Conservatory of Flowers, be a docent at City Hall, help organize the Peace in the Park festival, assist with special projects at Galeria de la Raza, and so much more.

When you think about it, nearly every cultural activity in the city is touched by the volunteer spirit. Culture doesn't just happen by itself; it's something we come

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together to create. What place or activity do you love? Why not find out if they could use some help this summer?