

THEATER

BERNARD WEINER

Asian American Theater Homeless, Low on Cash

The financial pinch on smaller resident theater companies in the Bay Area continues apace. The Asian American Theater Company, homeless after fire code violations forced it to abandon its Richmond District storefront, has canceled its final show of the season, while it attempts to regroup.

The theater has performed at four different locations in one year — Fort Mason in the Marina, the Illustrated Stage near the Ferry Building, the downtown YMCA, and currently at the Julian Theater on Potrero Hill — and “we’ve had great difficulty getting our Richmond District audience to follow us around the city,” said Dennis Myers, executive director.

And, said Myers, since the theater couldn’t find a location for its final production of the year, R.A. Shiomi’s “Once Was Enough,” it has postponed that premiere until the fall, when it hopes it will be able to move back into Fort Mason’s People’s Theater for at least one show.

“After that,” said Myers, “things are still up in the air. We’re running down a lot of leads on a

possible space, but, in addition to high rent, we’ll probably need \$100,000 to \$200,000 to renovate and bring whatever we find up to code. We’ve hired a development director and are starting to make a major fundraising effort, but it’s hard to start more or less from scratch. Morale has been way down ever since we lost our space.”

The Asian American business and cultural community should be the natural underwriter and supporter for this fine troupe, one of the Bay Area’s leading smaller resident companies, but so far the large grants haven’t been forthcoming.