



David Henry Hwang to Host AAPAC Roundtable Event, 2/13

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by BWV News Desk



The Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC) released preliminary findings today on the representation of minority actors on New York City's most prominent stages during the last five years. The full report, which will be released on Monday February 13th in

conjunction with an industry roundtable, tallies the ethnic make-up of casts from all shows which opened on Broadway during this period and productions from sixteen of the largest not-for-profit theatres in New York City: The Atlantic Theatre Company, Classic Stage Company, Lincoln Center Theatre, Manhattan Theatre Club, MCC, The New Group, New York Theatre Workshop, Playwrights Horizons, Primary Stages, Public Theatre, Roundabout Theatre Company, Second Stage, Signature Theatre, Theatre for a New Audience, Vineyard Theatre and The York Theatre Company. It is the first report on minority casting in New York theatre ever to be released publicly.

Promisingly, the report reveals that the percentage of minority actors in relation to total number of roles has increased, hovering at or near 21 percent for the past four years compared to 14 percent five years ago. In addition, the percentage of minority actors cast in roles which were not racially specific (what is commonly referred to as non-traditional or inclusive casting) rose year to year, an indicator of creativity within the casting process and, possibly, the breaking down of traditional racial stereotypes.

Still, only 10.6 percent of all roles this past year were cast without regard to race and very few minority actors were seen in leading roles. With very few ethnic and minority stories in mainstream New York theatre during this period, expanding non-traditional casting seems to be the best way to secure more employment opportunities for minority actors. Numbers for Native American, Arab American/Middle Eastern and disabled actors were negligible and practically non-existent.

Most of the gains came from African-American performers who far outpaced their minority counterparts. Percentage of African-American performers to total number of roles doubled to 16 percent in the 08/09 and 09/10 seasons compared to 8 percent five years ago, dipping slightly to 14 percent this past year. African-Americans were far more likely than any other minority group to be cast in a role that did not specify race. Though far behind in total numbers, Latino performers also doubled their visibility, accounting for 4 percent of total roles this past season compared to 2 percent five years ago.

In contrast, Asian American performers do not seem to be a part of the trend towards more inclusive casting. Asian American performers saw their numbers drop, from 3 percent of all roles five years



ago to 1 percent in the 08/09 and 09/10 seasons with a slight up tick to 2 percent this past year. While they were as likely as their Latino colleagues to be non-traditionally cast five and four years ago, in the past three years numbers of non-traditionally cast roles increased for Latinos while they decreased for Asians.

- Asian Americans comprise 12.9 percent of New York City and is the city's fastest growing major minority group, yet Asian American actors accounted for only 1.6 percent of all available roles in new productions on Broadway, 3.2 percent of roles at non-profit companies and 2.3 percent of roles when looking at the industry as a whole.
- There were only 18 Principal Broadway contracts for Asian American actors in the last five years.
- Asian American performers are the least likely among the major minority groups to play roles that are not defined by their race.

In response to these findings, AAPAC will hold an industry roundtable with prominent producers, artistic directors, directors, playwrights, agents and casting directors to have a dialogue on access and representation of minority actors on NYC stages and how best to overcome obstacles to more inclusive casting. It will be co-presented with Fordham University and will be moderated by Tony Award-winning playwright David Henry Hwang (Chinglish, M. Butterfly):

AAPAC and Fordham University present
"RepresentAsian: The Changing Face of New York Theater"
Monday, February 13th, at 7:00 pm
The Pope Auditorium at Fordham University
60th St/and Columbus avenue, just inside main entrance

To RSVP, send an email to aapacrsvp@gmail.com Seating is limited.

Roundtable participants are currently being confirmed and will be announced in the next week. To check the latest updates and to submit questions for roundtable participants, go to:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Aapac-Asian-American-Performers-Action-Committee/274685732556028>