

2014-15 NYC Theatre Season Hits Record High in Diversity Per AAPAC's Report

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 by BWW News Desk

The Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC) released its annual report, "Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages," detailing the ethnic distribution of actors hired last theater season on Broadway and at the top sixteen not-for-profit theater companies in New York City. It is the only publicly available report of its kind.



In the 2014-15 season, the NYC theatre industry hit a record high in the 9 years AAPAC has data collected. For the first time, 30% of all available roles went to actors of color, a jump from 24% the previous year. After three years in a row of exceeding the nine-year average of 23%, it seems safe to say that there is a definite upward trend in the casting of actors of color.

- African American actors were cast in 17% of all roles, Latino actors in 3%, Asian American actors in 9% and all other minorities (including disabled actors) comprised less than 1% when looking at both Broadway and the non-profit theatre companies. Caucasian actors filled 70% of all roles. Caucasians continue to be the only ethnicity to over-represent compared to their respective population size in the New York City/the Tri-State area.
- On Broadway in the 2014-15 season, numbers for minority actors dropped to 22% of all roles from 24% the previous year. Despite Asian numbers increasing from 2% to 11% (largely due to *The King and I* which was responsible for employing more than half of all Asians hired in the industry) and Latino representation increasing slightly from 1% to 2%, numbers for African American actors suffered a severe drop, from 21% in the 2013-14 season to only 9% this year, one of the worst showings on record and leading to a net loss for the Broadway industry as a whole.
- The non-profit theatres were clearly the driving force behind the upswing in total minority actors, filling 38% of all available roles with actors of color, a 13 point jump from 25% last year and the highest point on record. Only one non-profit theatre company in the study hired no actors of color this season, MCC Theatre Company.
- In the non-profit sector, African American employment saw the largest increase, filling 26% of all roles, a significant leap from 13% the previous year and a record high for African American employment for the years we have data. Of all the non-profit theatre companies, [The Public Theater](#) hired the most African American actors with the largest number of contracts going to its production of *Hamilton*.
- Latino representation within the non-profit sector remained unchanged from the previous year, holding steady at 4%.
- Asian American representation within the non-profit sector increased to 7% this year from 5% the preceding season. Percentages of Asian American representation among the non-profits have been higher than the 9-year average of 4.4% for the past 3 years, indicating an upward trend. This year, every one of the non-profit theatres studied employed Asian American actors except for [MCC Theater](#), [Primary Stages](#), [Signature Theatre](#), and [York Theatre Company](#).
- Only 10.2% of all available roles were non-traditionally cast this season, down from 11.2% the previous year. This

year's levels revert back to the nine-year average of 10% after slight upticks in the preceding two seasons. Non-traditional casting percentages have largely remained stagnant over the 9 years studied and have not moved as significantly as the percentages for total minority employment.

- 5.3% of roles went to African American actors for roles that were not defined by their race.
- 2.3% of roles went to Latino actors for roles that were not defined by their race.
- 2.0% of roles went to Asian American actors for roles that were not defined by their race. Asian Americans were the minority group least likely to be able to transcend their race.

MOST DIVERSE: The following theatre companies hired the greatest number of actors of color based on the percentage of available roles at their theatre. [The Public Theater](#) topped the list of companies this year.

1. THE PUBLIC THEATER (62%)
2. SECOND STAGE THEATRE (53%)
3. NEW YORK THEATRE WORKSHOP (50%)
4. PRIMARY STAGES (44%--tied)
4. THEATRE FOR A NEW AUDIENCE (44%--tied)?
5. SIGNATURE THEATRE (43%)

LEAST DIVERSE: The following theatre companies hired the lowest number of actors of color based on the percentages of available roles at their theatre.? [MCC Theater](#) was the only theatre studied that hired no minority actors at all this season.

1. MCC THEATER (0%)
2. YORK THEATRE COMPANY (12%--tied)
2. CLASSIC STAGE COMPANY (12%--tied)
3. ATLANTIC THEATRE COMPANY (18 %)?
4. ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY (20%)
5. MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB (28%)

HIGHEST NON-TRADITIONAL CASTING: The following theatres had the highest percentage of roles that were cast non-traditionally out of all available roles at their theatre.

1. CLASSIC STAGE COMPANY (100% of 6 minority actors)
2. VINEYARD THEATRE (78% of 9 minority actors)
3. NEW YORK THEATRE WORKSHOP (75% of 8 minority actors)
4. THEATRE FOR A NEW AUDIENCE (61% of 18 minority actors)
5. THE PUBLIC THEATRE (48% of 61 minority actors)

LOWEST NON-TRADITIONAL CASTING: The following theatres had the lowest percentage of non-traditionally

cast roles (though one, The [Signature Theatre](#), was one of the theatres that hired the most minority actors but in racially-specific roles).

1. THE NEW GROUP (0% of 5 minority actors--tied)
1. MCC THEATER (0% of 0 minority actors--tied)
1. YORK THEATRE COMPANY (0% of 1 minority actor--tied)
1. SIGNATURE THEATRE (0% of 29 minority actors--tied)
1. PRIMARY STAGES (0% of 7 minority actors-tied)

The full report is available for download on the AAPAC website: www.aapacnyc.org.

The Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC) was formed in 2011 by a group of American actors of Asian descent to expand the perception of Asian American performers in order to increase their access to and visibility on New York City's stages. In addition to publishing the only publicly available statistics on ethnic diversity in mainstream New York theatre, AAPAC engages in consciousness raising around issues of difference and access to equal casting opportunities by hosting symposia and roundtables as well as through outreach and dialogue to specific theatre companies. AAPAC has led and advised on several international campaigns this past year surrounding Asian impersonation and exclusionary casting practices, most recently against the Roundabout Theatre Company and its Broadway production of "The Mystery of Edwin Drood." AAPAC is actively working with its allies within the industry to create change, including being a participant in the Broadway Diversity Summit, a dialogue organized by the Broadway League bringing together the unions and organizations working within the Broadway space. More information at www.aapacnyc.org.