

Hamilton, The King and I Among Reasons for Improved Ethnic Diversity on NYC Stages

 danbacalzo.wordpress.com/2016/05/02/hamilton-the-king-and-i-among-reasons-for-improved-ethnic-diversity-on-nyc-stages/

danbacalzo

Everybody's talking about *Hamilton* these days. The musical boasts a diverse cast, and its Off-Broadway premiere at the Public Theater is among the reasons for a significant increase in the number of available roles—30%—being cast with actors of color during the 2014-2015 NYC theatre season.

The statistic comes from the latest “Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages” report from The Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC), which notes that this is a record high in the nine years the organization has collected data on the ethnic distribution of actors hired on Broadway and the top sixteen not-for-profit theater companies in NYC.

The increased representation of actors of color was particularly prominent in the Off-Broadway sector, led by The Public Theater which hired 62% of its available roles in the season with minority actors. Second Stage Theatre hired 53% of its roles with non-white actors, while New York Theatre Workshop hired 50% of its roles with actors of color.

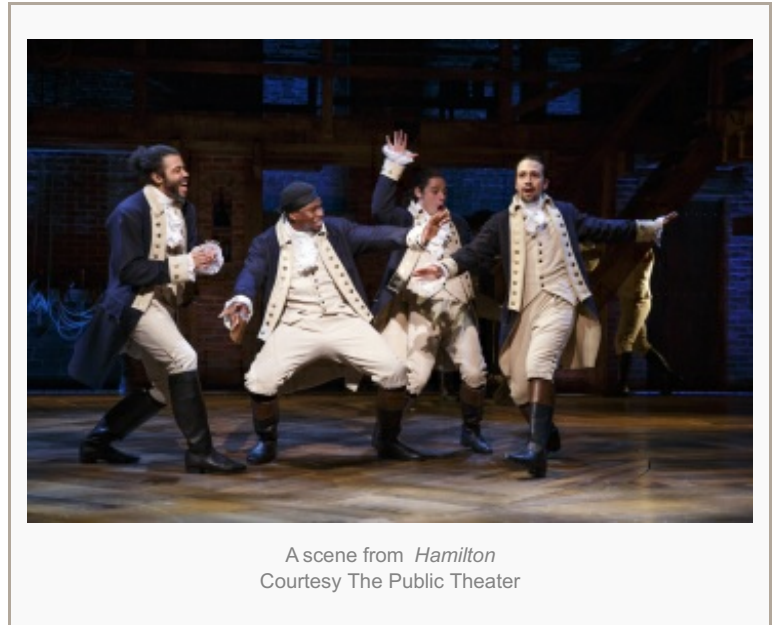
However, this trend did not extend to all theaters in NYC, with MCC Theater shockingly hiring no actors of color at all, while York Theatre Company and Classic Stage Company only hired 12% of its roles with actors of color. It should be noted, however, that while CSC's overall number is low, it scored highest in the percentage of minority actors being non-traditionally cast.

On Broadway, 22% of roles cast in the 2014-2015 season were with minority actors, a dip of 2% from the previous season. However, Asian American representation on Broadway increased dramatically, going from 2% to 11%, primarily due to the opening of *The King and I*, which employed over half of all the Asians who were cast in the given time frame.

It should be noted that these statistics do not account for the Broadway transfer of *Hamilton* or the premiere of the musical *Allegiance*, both of which opened during the 2015-2016 theatre season, and so were not part of this study.

And while this season's report on ethnic diversity showed improvement, that does not mean that the issue of ethnic representation in theatre is not still fraught with anxiety, as recent casting controversies from both stage and film have shown. Similarly, AAPAC's focus is centered on New York City, and so does not cover similar ground for the numerous regional theaters in the country.

For AAPAC's full report, visit www.aapacnyc.org.





Ken Watanabe, Kelli O'Hara in *The King and I*
Courtesy Lincoln Center Theater