

New Study Indicates Broadway Shows Employ Higher Percentage of Minority Actors Than Not-for-Profit Sector

By Andrew Gans
February 15, 2013

A new study released by the Asian American Performers Action Coalition finds that the not-for-profit sector lags behind the commercial Broadway sector in terms of hiring minority actors.

The study focused on the top 16 not-for-profit theatre companies in New York City.

In the 2011-12 season, African-American actors were cast in 16 percent of all roles, Hispanic American/Latino actors in 3 percent and Asian-American actors in 3 percent (others, including Arab American/Middle Eastern and Native American actors, comprised 1 percent). Caucasian actors filled 77 percent of all roles at these not-for-profit companies.

On Broadway minority actors filled 25 percent of all roles for the past two years, the highest percentage in the six years studied in the report. In fact, African-American representation hit a six-year high this past season at 19 percent. Asian Americans increased a percentage point over the previous year to 3 percent.

The non-profits, which had once consistently hired more actors of color than the commercial sector (reaching a high of 27 percent during the 2008-09 season), have fallen below the industry average of 20 percent for the second year in a row, landing at 19 percent this past year.

The following are this year's rankings for the most and least diverse among the 16 companies based on percentages of actors of color employed:

MOST DIVERSE

1. SIGNATURE THEATRE (46.4%)
2. ATLANTIC THEATER COMPANY (29.5%)
3. VINEYARD THEATRE (28.6%)
4. PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS (27.8%)
5. NEW YORK THEATRE WORKSHOP (25%)

LEAST DIVERSE

1. YORK THEATRE COMPANY (0%)
2. CLASSIC STAGE COMPANY (2.9%)
3. PRIMARY STAGES (5.6%)
4. ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY (6.1%)
5. MCC THEATER (7.7%)

The report also tracked the number of minority actors cast in roles not racially-specific (non-traditional casting): Only 10 percent of all roles received by actors of color were not defined by the color of their skin. The theatre companies with the highest percentage of roles cast non-traditionally follow:

MOST INCLUSIVE CASTING

1. PUBLIC THEATER (19.2%)
2. THEATRE FOR A NEW AUDIENCE (13.3%)
3. MANHATTAN THEATRE CLUB (13%)
4. SECOND STAGE COMPANY (12.5%)
5. VINEYARD THEATRE (7.1%)

The full report is available for download by visiting aapacnyc.org.

