

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ASIAN PERFORMERS GROUP UNVEILS REPORT ON UNDER-  
REPRESENTATION OF ASIAN ACTORS ON NEW YORK CITY STAGES.

WILL HOLD INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2012, 7 PM. “CHINGLISH” AUTHOR **DAVID HENRY HWANG** TO MODERATE.

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 13<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:aapacrsvp@gmail.com) Seating is limited.

Roundtable participants are currently being confirmed. To check the latest updates and to submit questions for our roundtable participants, go to:

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

## BIOS

**DAVID HENRY HWANG** is the author of *M. Butterfly* (1988 Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Awards, Pulitzer finalist), *Golden Child* (1998 Tony nomination, 1997 OBIE Award), *FOB* (1981 OBIE Award), *The Dance and the Railroad* (Drama Desk nomination), *Family Devotions* (Drama Desk Nomination), *Sound and Beauty*, *Bondage* and *Yellow Face* (2008 OBIE Award, Finalist for the 2008 Pulitzer Prize). His current play, *Chinglish*, was named Time Magazine's "Best American Play of the Year" and ends its Broadway run at the LongAcre Theatre on January 29, 2012. He wrote the scripts for the Broadway musicals Elton John & Tim Rice's *Aida* (co-author), Rodgers &

Hammerstein's Flower Drum Song (2002 revival, 2003 Tony nomination), and Disney's Tarzan. His opera libretti include three works for composer Philip Glass, 1000 Airplanes on the Roof, The Voyage (Metropolitan Opera), and The Sound of a Voice; as well as Bright Sheng's The Silver River, Osvaldo Golijov's Ainadamar (two 2007 Grammy Awards) and Unsuk Chin's Alice In Wonderland (Opernwelt's 2007 "World Premiere of the Year"). Hwang penned the feature films M. Butterfly, Golden Gate, and Possession (co-writer), and also co-wrote the song "Solo" with Prince. A native of Los Angeles, Hwang serves on the Council of the Dramatists Guild. He attended Stanford University and Yale Drama School, and was appointed by President Clinton to the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

**ASIAN AMERICAN PERFORMERS ACTION COALITION (AAPAC)** AAPAC'S mission is to expand the perception of Asian American performers in order to increase their access to and representation on New York City's stages. AAPAC hosted two symposia for the New York theatre community in 2011 to begin a discussion on why the worlds presented on New York City stages do not reflect the racial diversity of the real world we live in. AAPAC will release their report of minority representation in New York theatre in 2012 -- the first and only publicly available report of its kind. This report will hopefully be used to track casting trends and to raise awareness where any inequities exist.