

Entertainment: Study Finds Increasing Diversity on Broadway

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NEW YORK — Diversity is increasing onstage on Broadway, according to a new study by the Asian American Performers Action Coalition.

The study, released Monday, examined the 2015-16 season and found it to be the most diverse the group has reviewed so far, with 35 percent of all roles going to minority actors, up from 30 percent the previous season and 24 percent the year before that.

The coalition has now compiled 10 years of data on diversity on New York stages.

Musicals like “Hamilton,” “On Your Feet!” and “The Color Purple” have provided opportunities for African-American and Latino performers in particular. During the 2015-16 season, 23 percent of all roles went to African-American actors and 7 percent went to Latino actors. But Asian-American performers dropped to 4 percent of all roles; the arrival of “Allegiance,” set at a Japanese internment camp during World War II, could not sufficiently offset the departure of “The King and I.”

Plays lagged far behind musicals, with minority actors in only 16 percent of those roles. And most of that casting — 14 percent overall — went to African-American actors, boosted particularly by Danai Gurira’s “Eclipsed,” which is set in Liberia.

Minorities are still underrepresented onstage compared to New York City’s demographics: They make up 56 percent of the city’s population, according to the 2010 census. And a 2016 study by Actors’ Equity found that the problem extends beyond the city: Nationwide, white stage actors generally earn higher wages and hold a disproportionate percentage of theater jobs.

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