

NOT EVEN
a gender analysis of
500 San Francisco/Bay Area theatrical productions
from the *Counting Actors Project*
2011-2014

by Valerie Weak

in collaboration with

Martha Richards, Executive Director, WomenArts

Christine Young, Associate Professor, University of San Francisco

March 2015

Women
ARTS

PREFACE

The San Francisco/Bay Area has long been recognized as a hotbed of theatrical innovation. With more than 400 companies in nine counties, the region has more theatre companies per capita than almost any other metropolitan area in the US. Approximately 200 new plays are premiered here each year, many going on to wider success.

And yet – the number of adequately-paid theatre jobs for playwrights, directors, and actors is tiny. The *Not Even* report is based on data that Valerie Weak started counting in 2011, because she was concerned about her own lack of work as a union actor. If we take a closer look at the salaries of theatre artists in the region, we can see why anyone working in theatre would be concerned by a dip in income.

According to the U.S. Census, the median salary for the general population in the Bay Area is approximately \$72,000 per year - a little less than \$1,400/week. But theatre artists make far less than that from their stage work. For instance over 60% of the union actors in this study made somewhere between \$177/week and \$600/week for the weeks that they were working as stage actors. That's less than half of the median weekly income for other people in the region, and those are the actors with enough professional credits to join the union. The non-union actors usually receive small stipends or nothing.

So it is a miracle that we have a theatre scene here at all, especially one with so much vitality. The miracle is only possible because so many playwrights, directors, actors, and other theatre personnel are willing to juggle other jobs and make huge personal contributions of time and energy for very low wages. The situation is challenging for everyone in theatre, but as Valerie Weak's research shows, it is worse for women because they get fewer jobs, and the jobs they get tend to pay less than the jobs of their male peers.

The *Not Even* study examines gender data from 500 shows over the past three years, which is not every single show that was done, but it is certainly enough to get a sense of major trends. Also, the statistics in the *Not Even* report are consistent with the results of similar studies around the country. Since the funding for this kind of research is negligible, most of the studies have been done by dedicated volunteers like Valerie Weak.

Each group counts a little differently, but all of the studies show that women are seriously under-represented. For instance, Valerie Weak found that women were 27% of the playwrights and 42% of the directors of the 500 shows that she counted in the San Francisco/Bay Area between 2011 and 2014. [A study of 355 off-Broadway productions from 2010-2014 by the League of Professional Theatre Women in New York found that women were 30% of the playwrights and 33% of the directors.](#) The [Chicago Storefront Summit](#) issued a report indicating that only 18.8% of plays produced in Chicago in 2009 were written by one woman or a group of women. A study by the [Los Angeles Female](#)

Playwrights Initiative of the 4,796 productions in Los Angeles Stage Alliance's database from 2002-2010, found that only 20% were written by women.

In spite of these consistently daunting statistics, there are some hopeful signs of change both in the Bay Area and nationally. There has been a groundswell of discussion and organizing locally. Women here have organized a **Facebook group of feminist theatre artists** with almost 600 members and monthly salons, as well as a **Meet-up group** of women who go to plays by women together. **Works by Women San Francisco** spotlights the work of local women theatre artists and keeps us up to date on national and international feminist theatre trends. We have established an active Gender Parity Advisory Committee at **Theatre Bay Area**, an alliance of over 400 local theatre and dance companies; and **American Conservatory Theatre** is spearheading a study on **women in theatre leadership roles**. **Shotgun Players** in Berkeley has just launched a season of all women playwrights.

On the national level, over 50 theatres in Washington, DC are joining forces to produce premieres of works by women playwrights this fall as part of a **city-wide "Women's Voices" festival**, and additional gender parity studies are being done by Boston's StageSource, the Lilly Awards Foundation, and Theatre Communications Group. The Equity in Theatre initiative of the Playwrights Guild of Canada is issuing a study on Canadian women in theatre in April 2015.

In my forty years of working in and around theatres, I have had many conversations with highly-skilled women who were doubting their artistic talents and thinking of leaving the field because they were not being hired. I always try to remind these women about the history of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a massive federal employment program designed to put Americans back to work during the Great Depression of the 1930s. There was a lot of controversy at the time about whether artists should be included in this program. Many were skeptical that "unemployed artists" had enough talent to create anything worthwhile. But it turned out that many of America's greatest artists were out of work and needed jobs. The list of WPA artists includes artistic giants such as Zora Neale Hurston, Arthur Miller, Eudora Welty, Ralph Ellison, Alice Neel, and Orson Welles.

Thanks so much to Valerie Weak for channeling her frustration about being unemployed into a report that can help all women see that their lack of employment is part of a larger pattern of discrimination instead of a reflection of their talent. Let's hope this study gives all of the amazing women in our field the courage to keep doing their art in spite of all the obstacles.

- **Martha Richards, Executive Director, WomenArts**

INTRODUCTION

I started the *Counting Actors Project* because of a hunch. I kept noticing something was off about the artists I was seeing at auditions and onstage. It seemed like more men were working than women. On a personal level, I'd recently joined Actors' Equity, my 40th birthday was getting closer, and I just wasn't getting cast. As someone who'd worked fairly consistently as a younger, non-union actor, I couldn't work out the reason for the apparent change in my casting appeal.

Why had the work dried up? Was it me? How much work was out there for a female union actor anyway? The first two questions seemed hard to pin down. But in finding an answer to the third, I thought I might get partial answers to the first two. And so, in 2011, I started counting.

I began by counting the number of female and male actors, playwrights, and directors working on shows I saw that month. I published the numbers on a blog I was keeping at the time, and they sparked some interest. Then, I asked readers of my blog, friends, and colleagues from the theatre community to count with me. They emailed me numbers from shows they were working on or seeing, so I could include those too.

Once I had counted 100 shows, I decided to see how things stacked up when the type of union contract was factored in. After a conversation with a colleague who runs a new works company made me wonder whether productions of Shakespeare, Shaw and Chekhov could account for the discrepancy in playwright numbers, I started tracking the year each play was written. I analyzed the aggregated data for shows 101-200 and 201-300 and published the trends on my blog.

In 2013, after counting nearly 250 shows, I wrote an article for *Theatre Bay Area Magazine*, sharing the data trends and asking local playwrights, directors and actors how these numbers connected to their perceptions about their work.

While I have been counting, women artists in our community have also started to talk. Like me, they've noticed something is wrong. Some feel they have been working harder than their male peers, but not getting as much recognition. Some believe they have been impacted professionally because of their gender. These women have started organizing into groups, and taking action. They have been inspired to produce their own work, to ask for childcare as part of negotiation, to see and support the work of other women artists.

One of these groups is *Works by Women San Francisco*, an online advocacy site curated by Christine Young. In February 2014, I was able to move my monthly posts to *WWSF* and connect with a larger audience. In November 2014, *WomenArts*, helmed by Martha Richards, commissioned this report in order to share an analysis of the cumulative data from 500 shows counted between 2011-2014.

As I've worked on this project, I've had to make some tough decisions about what and how to count. First, I acknowledge that my counting method privileges a female/male gender binary. Transgender artists are included in this project, but counted as female if they use a she/her pronoun, male if they use a he/him pronoun, or genderqueer if they use zhe/hir/they. Since the genderqueer data I've managed to collect is extremely small, I have chosen to omit it from this version of the report. Next, I have not tracked age or race/ethnicity. Since much of my collected data comes from outside observers, assumptions about these identity categories could easily be incorrect or misleading. Unfortunately, gathering self-identified demographic data was beyond the scope of this volunteer project. I hope that those with better funding and organizational infrastructure will consider tracking these categories in future data gathering efforts.

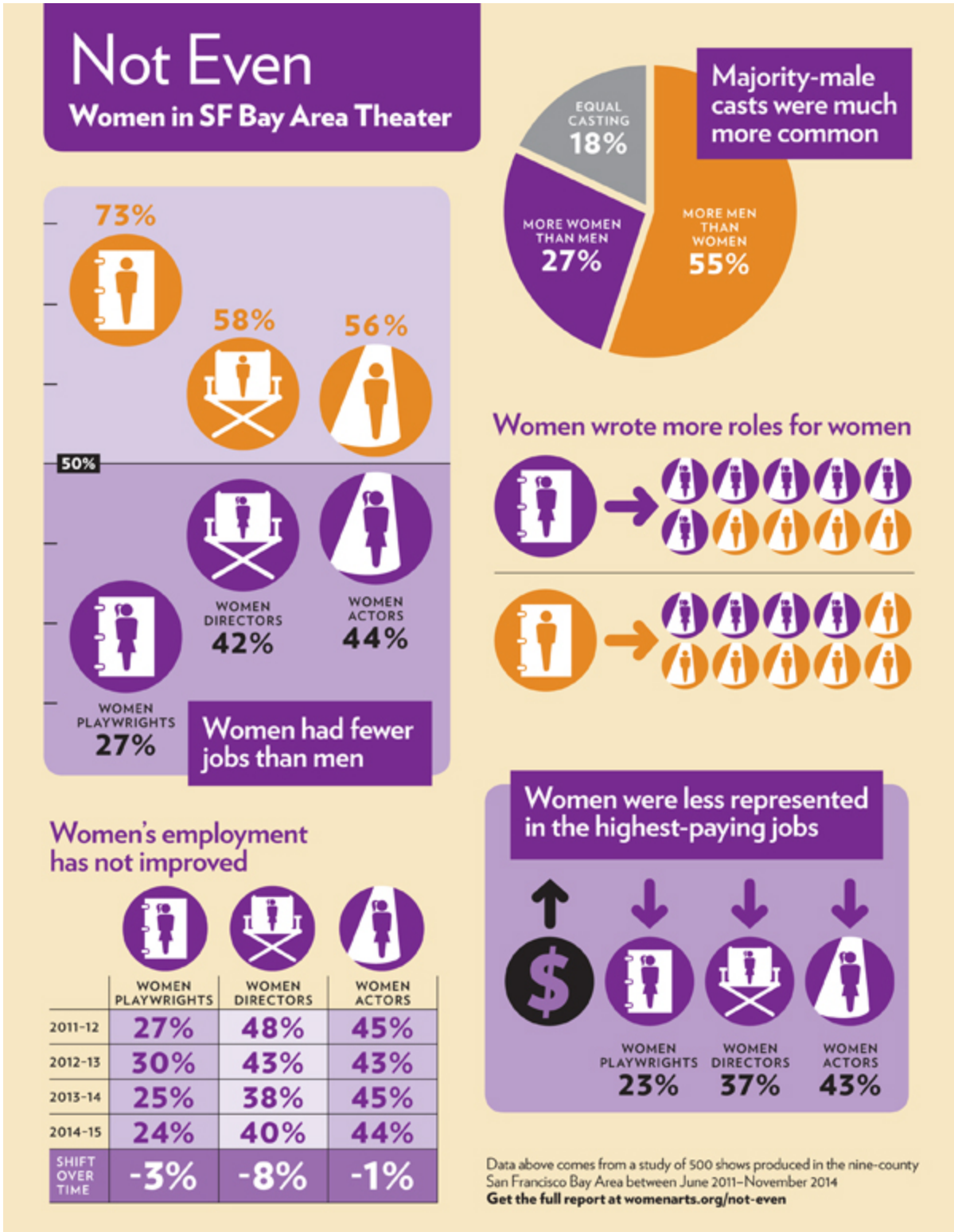
Working on the *Counting Actors Project* has changed me. I've been able to see just how much (or how little) work is being produced in a given month, and I've discovered that my hunch was correct - *something is off for women theatre artists in the San Francisco/Bay Area*. It has been particularly shocking to discover just how few opportunities there are for female playwrights here.

Over the course of working on the project, I've come to realize that while I have no control over what projects a company chooses to produce, or whether or not I am cast in a project, *I do have control over the material I use to audition*. I now actively seek out the work of female playwrights to use for audition monologues. When I'm auditioning, I feel that I'm not just there to vie for a role, but also to introduce a director or an artistic leader to a female playwright they could be producing.

Finding this larger mission in the audition process is an example of how working on the *Counting Actors Project* has transformed me from an artist into an *artist-advocate*. While I'm still noticing differences in the numbers of women and men working, I'm also seeing that change is possible, and that when women's voices and contributions are prioritized, parity can happen.

- Valerie Weak

KEY FINDINGS



design by Cheshire Isaacs

DATA ANALYSIS

Between June 2011 and November 2014, audience members, actors, directors, stage managers, technical staff, and theatre administrators submitted gender-related data on 500 shows produced in the nine county San Francisco/Bay Area. This report contains findings and trends resulting from an analysis of these shows.

In preparing this report, I wanted to ask questions of the data that would be of most interest to San Francisco/Bay Area theatrical decision-makers. So I surveyed Artistic Directors, Associate Artistic Directors, Literary Managers and Casting Directors about what they would like to learn from this report. 26 artistic leaders responded to the survey. Their top questions were:

- What's the overall picture? How much work is there?
- Have the employment numbers for women changed over time?
- How does contract type/budget size affect the gender ratios?
- How does the year a play was written affect the gender ratios?
- Do women write roles for women, and men write roles for men?
- Do women direct plays by women, and men direct plays by men?
- How often do plays have more than 50% roles for one gender?

This report looks at the data using these questions as lenses. Additional data charts are available at www.womenarts.org/not-even, including a complete list of the 500 shows sorted by producing theatre, and show by show breakdowns of all data included in this report.

What’s the overall picture? How much work is there for women and men in San Francisco/Bay Area theatre?

In the 500 shows counted, women had fewer jobs than men in every category.

Women were best represented as non-union actors, followed by directors and union actors, with playwrights trailing behind at only 27%. Not every show had one playwright and one director. Some plays were co-written and/or co-directed. Some shows were an evening of short plays that had more than one playwright and/or more than one director. For musicals, the musical director is counted in the director category, and all writers (book, lyrics, composer) are counted in the playwright category.

| | Women | Men |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Playwrights | 27% 179 artists | 73% 485 artists |
| Directors | 42% 246 artists | 58% 339 artists |
| Union Actors | 40% 575 artists | 60% 860 artists |
| Non-Union Actors | 46% 1147 artists | 54% 1338 artists |

Table 1: Women Had Fewer Jobs Than Men

Have the employment numbers for women changed over time?

Between 2011-2014, there was no significant improvement in women’s employment in San Francisco/Bay Area theatre.

During this time, women union actors made very slight gains, moving up six points, from 38% to 44% and women non-union actors wobbled their way down four points from 48% to 44%. The proportions for women directors dropped and then rebounded slightly, traveling from 48% down to 38% then up to 40% for a net loss of eight points.

The women playwrights numbers have dropped as well, accounting for only one quarter of the shows produced in the last eighteen months of the study.

Gender parity requires continued attention and energy on many fronts in order for us to reach equal representation for playwrights, directors and both union and non-union actors.

| | 2011-2012 123 Shows | 2012-2013 145 Shows | 2013-2014 150 Shows | 2014-2015* 82 Shows |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Women Playwrights | 27% 42 artists | 30% 57 artists | 25% 54 artists | 24% 26 artists |
| Men Playwrights | 73% 111 artists | 70% 131 artists | 75% 160 artists | 76% 83 artists |
| Women Directors | 48% 68 artists | 43% 71 artists | 38% 68 artists | 40% 39 artists |
| Men Directors | 52% 73 artists | 57% 95 artists | 62% 113 artists | 60% 58 artists |
| Women Union Actors | 38% 119 artists | 39% 180 artists | 40% 173 artists | 44% 103 artists |
| Men Union Actors | 62% 195 artists | 61% 278 artists | 60% 255 artists | 56% 132 artists |
| Women Non-Union Actors | 48% 284 artists | 45% 310 artists | 47% 333 artists | 44% 220 artists |
| Men Non-Union Actors | 52% 305 artists | 55% 379 artists | 53% 374 artists | 56% 280 artists |

Table 2: Women’s Employment Has Not Improved

**Note: Because data set was capped at 500 shows, only about half of the 2014-2015 season is included*

How does contract type/budget size affect the gender ratios?

Women were less represented in the highest-paying jobs.

While I didn’t have access to exact budget information for Bay Area theatre companies, I was able to consider the type of Actors’ Equity contract used to produce each show.

Contract types define how much artists are compensated for the work they do. While Actors' Equity is the union for stage actors and stage managers, often compensation for playwrights and directors falls in line with what actors are making. Actors' Equity productions at the highest level usually have the largest budgets and are produced by the most high profile companies in the region. Thus, analyzing shows by contract type correlates to looking at the budget size of producing theatres.

For the purposes of this study, I divided shows into three contract categories:

- **Non-Union/Union Code:** Non-union shows do not use Equity actors. Pay rates can vary wildly, but artists are typically offered some kind of stipend. Union Codes allow Equity actors to work, but without benefit of contract. Like non-union shows, pay rates can vary significantly, but all artists typically receive some kind of stipend. We have two union codes available for use in the Bay Area: the Bay Area Project Policy (BAPP) and the Member Production Code (MPC). Both have limits on rehearsal hours, size of theatre, total number of performances and more. The BAPP stipulates that no one can be paid more than the Equity actors, so other artists working on BAPP productions receive a stipend that is equal to or less than the union members' stipend. The MPC is used by Equity members to produce their own work, and is not available to theatre companies. The MPC has no required stipend.
- **Equity Contract without Health Weeks:** These lower level Equity contracts require that the actor is paid a weekly salary, but do not require the producer to contribute additional money to Actor's Equity's health care fund. A union actor working on this level of contract will not gain any eligibility for union health care coverage. Pay rates here are between \$200-\$250/week for the union actor. Non-union actors working on these types of contracts may receive a stipend or a weekly salary depending on the company. In the Bay Area, these contracts include: Modified Bay Area Theatre Agreement (MBAT) *Tier 1 only*, Special Appearance Agreement (SA), Theatre for Young Audiences Agreement (TYA) *per performance contract only*.
- **Equity Contract with Health Weeks:** When an Equity contract includes health weeks, it means that for each week the actor works, the producer not only pays their salary, but also makes a contribution to the Actors' Equity health care fund. Actors who work enough weeks in a year at theatres that offer health weeks are eligible for union health care coverage. Salary minimums for these contracts can range between \$200-\$900/week. The health care contribution is an additional

\$155-\$165/week. Not all of these contracts allow for non-union actors to work on the same show as union actors, but when they do, the non-union actors can be paid a stipend or a weekly salary. These contracts include: Modified Bay Area Theatre Agreement (MBAT) *Tier 2 only*, Bay Area Theatre Agreement (BAT), Guest Artist Agreement (GA), Letter of Agreement (LOA), League of Resident Theatres Agreement (LORT), Theatre for Young Audiences Agreement (TYA) *weekly contract only*.

Additional details about these and other union codes and contracts are available on the Actors' Equity website (www.actorsequity.org) in the 'Document Library'.

In dividing the 500 shows counted into the three contract categories described above, the following trends emerged:

- Women playwrights got between 3 and 4 out of 10 productions at the two lower levels, and then slid down to fewer than one quarter of shows at the highest level.
- Women directors got about half or better of the jobs at the two lower levels, but only 37% of jobs at the highest level.
- Women union actors got more than half of the union roles at the lowest level, but only 39% of the union roles at the highest level.
- At the highest level, union and non-union women actors combined represented 43% of the total actors.
- At the highest level, union and non-union women worked in almost equal amounts (482 actors vs. 487 actors). However, at that same level, union men outnumbered non-union men by nearly 200 artists (744 actors vs. 549 actors).
This suggests that union contracts were biased towards male actors.

The drop in women's participation at the highest level of the compensation ladder points to a "glass proscenium" in our region's theatres, especially for playwrights, directors, and union actors. To break through this barrier, theatres at every level, but particularly those that offer Equity contracts with health weeks, must look for opportunities to employ more women.

| | Non-Union/ UnionCode 173 Shows | Equity Contract No Health Weeks 57 Shows | Equity Contract with Health Weeks 270 Shows |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Women Playwrights | 31% 72 artists | 38% 23 artists | 23% 84 artists |
| Men Playwrights | 69% 163 artists | 62% 37 artists | 77% 285 artists |
| Women Directors | 45% 87 artists | 59% 36 artists | 37% 123 artists |
| Men Directors | 55% 105 artists | 41% 25 artists | 63% 209 artists |
| Women Union Actors | 53% 47 artists | 38% 46 artists | 39% 482 artists |
| Men Union Actors | 47% 42 artists | 62% 74 artists | 61% 744 artists |
| Women Non-Union Actors | 47% 513 artists | 42% 147 artists | 47% 487 artists |
| Men Non-Union Actors | 53% 582 artists | 58% 207 artists | 53% 549 artists |

Table 3: Women Were Less Represented in the Highest-Paying Jobs

How does the year a play was written affect the gender ratios?

In many conversations about this project and the playwright numbers, what often comes up is what I like to call “the Shakespeare Defense”. Artists who work in the new play sector point to Shakespeare, Shaw, Chekhov and others from the traditional dramatic canon, and suggest that the continued popularity of plays by these playwrights are skewing the numbers. Pointing to successful contemporary women playwrights who get produced “all the time”, their proposal is that things are a lot more equal in the world of new plays. The data disproves this theory.

I decided to divide the 500 shows counted into two groups based on whether they were written before 1960, which for the purposes of this report I’ll refer to as “Classic”, or after 1960, in other words “Modern”.

Women wrote only 3 out of 100 plays in the Classic group; Shelagh Delaney (*Taste of Honey*), **Lillian Hellman** (*The Little Foxes*), and novelist **Zona Gale** (*In Friendship*), whose short stories were theatrically adapted by Word for Word, were the few “Classic” playwrights.

Women wrote only 3 out of every 10 plays in the Modern group. Yet, this ten-fold increase still leaves “Modern” women playwrights well short of parity. Some shows in this category had more than one writer, because of co-authoring situations and musicals where the playwright category includes writers of books, lyrics and music.

| | Women | Men |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Classic Shows Pre-1960 (92 shows) | 3% 3 playwrights | 97% 99 playwrights |
| Modern Shows 1960-2014 (408 Shows) | 31% 176 playwrights | 69% 386 playwrights |

Table 4: Classic and Modern Shows

But what if we just look at brand new shows? I sliced the Modern group down further to include only shows that were written between 2000-2014. I’ll refer to this group as “Millennial”.

Women wrote about 1 out of every 3 plays in the Millennial group. While this crop of plays is slightly closer to parity than the Modern group, it is still significantly short of equal representation.

| | Women | Men |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Millennial Shows 2000-2014 (336 shows) | 35% 166 playwrights | 65% 306 playwrights |

Table 5: Millennial Shows

The next set of questions that were of interest to artistic leaders are interconnected and point toward curiosities about the influence of gender on playwright/director pairing and season selection. Two additional questions that arise when we consider the combined

queries below is “do women artists tend to get siloed into working on ‘women’s projects’?” and “do women artists get fewer resources to do their work?”

Do women write roles for women and men write roles for men?

Men wrote 1154 roles for women actors to play, while women wrote only 360 roles. Yet while it might appear that men have written three times as many roles for women, we must remember that male playwrights have also been produced at more than three times the rate of female playwrights.

Both women and men write shows that skew towards a roughly 60/40 split favoring their gender. This suggests that the imbalance in roles for women could be corrected simply by producing more work written by female playwrights.

However, another noteworthy trend is that ***the average cast size for female playwrights is 5.6 actors, while the average cast size for male playwrights is 8.2 actors.*** Since women are better represented in the field of contemporary plays than classics, and since newer plays tend to have smaller casts, plays in this study written by women tended to be smaller cast plays. Thus, we cannot assume that producing more plays by contemporary women will be enough to solve the problem of fewer roles for women.

Another significant finding is that male playwrights outnumber female playwrights approximately 3 to 1 in shows at the highest contract level (see Table 3). Thus, we can interpret that more resources have been allotted to shows written by men than to shows written by women. ***While female playwrights tend to write more female characters than male playwrights do, they tend to be doing so on a smaller scale, and with fewer resources.***

There remains work to be done in the new play sector to move our stages closer to gender parity. But we can not only rely on new plays. We must also rediscover classic and modern plays written by women, and produce those as well.

| Shows Written by Women or All Women Teams 125 playwrights • 113 shows 42% Non-Union/Union Code • 58% Union Contract | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Women | Men |
| Directors | 63% 78 artists | 37% 46 artists |
| Union Actors | 57% 146 artists | 43% 112 artists |
| Non-Union Actors | 57% 214 artists | 43% 159 artists |

Table 6: Shows Written by Women

| Shows Written by Men or All Men Teams 399 playwrights • 346 shows 34% Non-Union/Union Code • 66% Union Contract | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| | Women | Men |
| Directors | 35% 134 artists | 65% 252 artists |
| Union Actors | 36% 368 artists | 64% 658 artists |
| Non-Union Actors | 43% 786 artists | 57% 1026 artists |

Table 7: Shows Written by Men

Do women direct plays by women and men direct plays by men?

Both female and male directors work more often with male playwrights. **But female directors are twice as likely to work with female playwrights as male directors.** Both female and male directors work with more male actors than female actors. **But female directors work with casts that are more likely to have gender parity. Female directors are also more likely to cast women who are members of Actors' Equity.**

| Shows Directed by Women 202 directors • 194 shows 37% Non-Union/Union Code 63% Union Contract | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Women | Men |
| Playwrights | 36% 82 artists | 64% 148 artists |
| Union Actors | 45% 235 artists | 55% 287 artists |
| Non-Union Actors | 48% 446 artists | 52% 478 artists |

Table 8: Shows Directed by Women

| Shows Directed by Men 296 directors • 269 shows 34% Non-Union/Union Code • 66% Union Contract | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Women | Men |
| Playwrights | 17% 56 artists | 83% 270 artists |
| Union Actors | 36% 281 artists | 64% 497 artists |
| Non-Union Actors | 44% 547 artists | 66% 704 artists |

Table 9: Shows Directed by Men

How often do plays have more than 50% roles for one gender?

There were twice as many shows with more than 50% roles for men than shows with more than 50% roles for women. While male playwrights did write more than half of the plays with majority female casts, they wrote even more plays with majority male casts.

Another significant finding is that men are nearly as likely as women to direct majority female cast shows. **However, women get fewer opportunities to direct majority male cast shows.** Nearly half of the majority female cast shows were produced at the lower non-union/union code level, while over two thirds of the majority male cast shows were produced at the higher union contract levels.

Women actors get more union contracts on majority female cast shows, and male actors get more union contracts on majority male cast shows, but given the significant difference in total number of shows, ***the number of female actors working on union contracts remains significantly lower than the number of male actors working on union contracts.***

| Shows with Majority Female Casts 136 shows 44% Non-Union/Union Code • 56% Union Contract | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Women | Men |
| Playwrights | 40% 70 artists | 60% 103 artists |
| Directors | 49% 81 artists | 51% 83 artists |
| Union Actors | 67% 219 artists | 33% 107 artists |
| Non-Union Actors | 66% 436 artists | 34% 227 artists |

Table 10: Shows with >50% Female Casts

| Shows with Majority Male Casts 274 shows 31% Non-Union/Union Code • 69% Union Contract | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Women | Men |
| Playwrights | 19% 69 artists | 81% 291 artists |
| Directors | 36% 114 artists | 64% 207 artists |
| Union Actors | 29% 254 artists | 71% 634 artists |
| Non-Union Actors | 43% 531 artists | 57% 948 artists |

Table 11: Shows with >50% Male Casts

Only 18% of shows had equal roles for women and men. Men were more than twice as likely to write these shows, and women and men directed them in roughly equal numbers. Union women were slightly less likely than union men to be employed on these shows, and non-union women were slightly more likely than non-union men to be employed.

| Shows with Equal Female/Male Casts 90 shows 31% Non-Union/ Union Code • 69% Union Contract | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Women | Men |
| Playwrights | 31% 40 artists | 69% 91 artists |
| Directors | 51% 51 artists | 49% 49 artists |
| Union Actors | 46% 102 artists | 54% 119 artists |
| Non-Union Actors | 52% 180 artists | 48% 163 artists |

Table 12: Shows with Female = Male Casts

To return to questions raised at the top of this section: do women artists tend to get siloed into working on ‘women’s projects’ with fewer resources to do their work?

Women Playwrights

- were more likely to write a majority female cast show
- were twice as likely to be directed by a female director
- received significantly fewer productions at the union level

Women Directors

- worked with female playwrights less often than they worked with male playwrights, but at almost twice the rate of male directors
- got fewer opportunities to work on majority male cast productions (more of which are produced at higher union contract levels)

Women Actors

- worked more often in shows written by women
- worked more often in shows directed by women

Women Union Actors

- were cast more often than men union actors in shows written by women
- were closer to parity in shows directed by women

Siloed may not be the correct term here. Women have been collaborating with women, and female playwrights and directors have given female actors more opportunities than male playwrights and directors have. However, the disparity in total numbers of projects for women vs. men in all categories does indicate that women playwrights, directors and actors receive fewer resources and opportunities than their male counterparts.

CONSEQUENCES OF UNMEASURED GENDER BIAS

This report has focused on describing employment trends for artists who are already working and being produced. But what about artists who want to work but lack opportunities to do so? This important missing data is challenging to measure, but worth considering. To what degree does gender bias make it more difficult for women to advance their careers, and how many women drop out of the field altogether because they can't find enough work or adequate resources to effectively do their work?

From personal experience, competition appears to be tight for female actors in our region. At many callbacks I attend, there are 4-6 women reading for a role and only 2-3 men reading opposite them. The men read multiple times, and the women only get one turn in the casting room. Does this limited exposure mean that a female actor must audition more often than a male actor before she books work? If so, what does this higher audition/booking rate do to her confidence and her decision about whether or not to continue pursuing an acting career? What about the conundrum that joining Actors' Equity means higher wages and a more professional working environment, but also many fewer jobs for women than men?

Female directors have told me they are not considered for directing slots as often as their equally experienced male peers, and that they have more difficulty breaking into the bigger houses. Who waits to be *asked* to direct because she doesn't want to appear pushy, and who pursues meetings with artistic leadership and asks for work because he believes he deserves to do so? Who gets pigeon-holed as "just a teaching artist" for her directing work with teens? How many artistic directors decide not to hire a female director because she has young children and may need to leave rehearsal to care for them?

When playwrights sit down to write, how many choose to make a character male rather than female in order to make their play more "universal" and thus more produceable? When an artistic leader chooses plays for a season, how many plays by women do they consider? If a director is asked to suggest projects, how many plays by women are on their pitch list?

Some of the answers to these questions may actually be measurable. For example: Theatre Bay Area could count the numbers of women and men who apply for slots in their annual general audition; Actors' Equity could share the demographic data they receive from casting directors; Literary Managers could publish their submission rates by gender.

But even though many pieces of the gender puzzle may be unmeasurable, these questions point to something vital. Season planning, hiring, casting and all of the steps in the process of producing theatre *contain choice*. Theatre-making is a creative process. We are making it up! Playwrights, directors, actors, designers, and producers are making choices all the time. And we can make those choices in ways that include women artists. Whether it's season selection, gender-blind casting, or as I discovered, an actor's audition monologues, choice is everywhere in what we do. We all have the power to transform our field by *choosing* to create opportunities for women to be seen and heard and to contribute equally to the work we make. I look forward to seeing what choices we all make to lead our field to a more equitable future.

CHOICES YOU CAN MAKE

FOR THEATRES

- **Gender Parity as a Multi-Year Goal** – If it seems too hard to move to 50% women playwrights and directors in one season, set it as a multi-year goal. If you have a 6 play season, and you include one more play written or directed by a women every year, you could achieve gender parity in three years.
- **Equal Pay Rates & Equity Contracts** – make sure you are paying women at the same rates as men, and set a goal of giving 50% of your Actors' Equity contracts to women.
- **Women on the Crew** – set a goal of hiring women for 50% of your designer, stage manager, technical, and other crew jobs.
- **Physical Safety** – if your theatre is in a challenging neighborhood, take steps to help women actors and other staff get to and from work safely.
- **Sexual Harassment** – establish policies and procedures for addressing claims of sexual harassment on the job.
- **Childcare** – consider offering childcare during rehearsals or performances.

FOR PLAYWRIGHTS

- **More Roles for Women** – write more roles for women, especially women of color and women over forty. Challenge the status quo by not assuming any particular character must be male or female.
- **More Female Protagonists** – create plays in which female characters demonstrate agency and the full range of human strengths and weaknesses.
- **Dialogue about the World** – make sure women characters talk to each other about something other than men. In real life women discuss many other topics.

FOR DIRECTORS

- **Cross-Gender Casting** – cast women in any/every role possible, particularly in Shakespeare and classic plays where male characters dominate.
- **Partner with Female Playwrights** – help women playwrights get produced by pitching their plays to theatres. Women's plays also tend to employ more women actors.

FOR ACTORS

- **Audition Pieces by Women** – use excerpts from plays by women when you audition.
- **Ask to Audition** – If you think you are suited to play a role that only men are being auditioned for, make a pitch to the director/producer to consider auditioning you as well.

FOR EVERYONE

- **Buy Tickets to Shows Written or Directed by Women!**
- **Donate to theatres that Support Women Artists!**
- **Help Promote Women Artists** – Studies show that women are reluctant self-promoters, and are often seen less favorably by leaders/decision-makers when they do self-promote. Help to raise the profile of women theatre artists by drawing attention to strong work via social media, via fan letters to artistic leaders, via face to face conversation.

DATA FAQ

How were shows selected and collected?

The show selection criteria were:

- **The performance took place in the 9 county San Francisco/Bay Area:** San Francisco, Alameda, Contra Costa, Santa Clara, Marin, Sonoma, San Mateo, Solano, and Napa counties OR the contract's city of origin was within the 9 county San Francisco/Bay Area (this typically excludes commercial productions of recent Broadway hits that are on a national tour).
- **The company pays their actors:** no school performances or shows done by a company that identifies as a community theater or amateur theater. There are some unpaid actors included in the count, typically working as interns/apprentices/students on a production that also included union actors.
- **The performance was a full production:** no staged readings, developmental showings, etc.

To collect show data, audience members and artists answered questions in an online submission form. The vast majority of shows collected were submitted by someone who either saw the show or was involved in the production. Show submissions came from actors, directors, playwrights, stage managers, technical crew, producers, and artistic and administrative staff. In the first few months of the project, there were a few shows that I collected via online programs (fewer than 15 of the total shows counted).

Why are there so many more playwrights and directors than shows?

Some of the shows included were written or directed by teams. Other shows might include multiple short plays, which may be written by more than one playwright and/or directed by more than one director. For musicals, the director category includes both directors and musical directors, and the playwright category includes writers of the book, lyrics and/or music.

Did you count transgender/gender non-conforming artists?

Yes. Any artist who self-referred with the pronoun she/her was counted as female and he/him was counted as male. If the artist used pronouns such as zhe/hir/they, they

were counted as transgender. Mostly this info was gleaned from program bios, but in a few cases, I searched online for interviews with artists that included questions about their preferred pronouns. I fully acknowledge that my counting method privileges a female/male gender binary. Because the numbers of transgender artists counted were extremely small, I did not include them in this version of the report.

Why didn't you count race/ethnicity in this project?

I felt that an accurate reporting of race/ethnicity would have required all artists involved to self-report their ethnic identity/racial background, and given the resources I had available for this project, I didn't have the capacity to do that. Asking those in the audience to speculate on the ethnicity of the actors they saw was something I was not comfortable doing. I urge organizations with more funding and organizational infrastructure to track race/ethnicity in future data gathering efforts.

Why didn't you count age in this project?

Like race/ethnicity, accurate reporting of age would have required artists to self-report. I was not comfortable with asking others to speculate on the age of actors they saw, and collecting self-reported data was beyond the capacity of this volunteer project. I urge organizations with more funding and organizational infrastructure to track age in future data gathering efforts.

Who do you count as a writer for adaptations and translations?

When a show is adapted from non-theatrical source material, the person doing the adaptation is counted as the playwright, not the author of the original material. For translations, the original playwright is counted, not the translator.

How do you count doublecast roles?

For doublecast roles, both actors are counted as full performers. Most often, this happens with children who alternate performances.

How do you count musicians?

Counting musicians depends on what they are asked to do in the performance. If the musicians are not onstage and do not have any lines, they aren't counted as actors. If they are seen onstage, it depends on whether or not they are given lines and/or

blocking, wear costumes that integrate with the cast, have character names or are simply credited as 'musician'. This is probably the most important counting related reason for seeing the shows live versus using a program or online resource to count.

Did you include understudies in your actor count?

No. Understudies are integrated into productions in very different ways at theaters in the Bay Area. In some cases they are paid a full weekly salary and their photo and bio is included in the program along with the cast, and elsewhere they may be uncompensated and/or uncredited. They may be only hired as an understudy, or also acting in the show in a smaller role with understudying a lead or larger role included in their job description. Because of the great variety of understudy compensation and obligation, I chose to leave them out of this report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Martha Richards and WomenArts for commissioning this report, and providing so much support and context for the advocacy work. Your expertise about gender parity advocacy is inspirational.

Thank you to Christine Young and Works by Women San Francisco for providing a platform for the blog posts and data submissions, as well as a sharp critical eye in the editing of this report, and for your tireless focus of shining a spotlight on women theatermakers. Suma Nagaraj did much of the heavy lifting - moving archival posts to the WWSF site and much more. Thank you Suma.

Dana Harrison, Brad Erickson, and Dale Albright at Theatre Bay Area provide amazing guidance and listen so well to the concerns of the SF/Bay Area theater community. Sam Hurwitt and Laura Brueckner of Theatre Bay Area's publications department gave the project early support and visibility. The members of Theatre Bay Area's Gender Parity Committee have been a sounding board throughout this process. Thanks to all of you.

Thank you to Fontana Butterfield and the "Yeah, I Said Feminist." Salon (over 500 theater-making feminists!) for sharing resources, telling stories, and bringing some powerful sisterhood.

Lauren Bloom and the Union Women's Advocacy Coalition were fantastic early adopters and message amplifiers. Thank you to all of you!

Thanks to the Bay Area Liaison Committee of Actor's Equity, especially Kelly Ground, Stephen Pawley and Aaron Wilton for helping me to confirm my information around Equity contract types.

Amy Clare Tasker and DIVAfest thank you for hosting events that were critical in forming coalitions around this issue and sharing the message.

Thank you Kevin for your endless patience.

And most importantly thank you to everyone who has contributed to this project: by sharing data, by sharing/retweeting/liking or commenting on a monthly post, or most importantly by starting a gender parity conversation.

ABOUT THE STUDY COLLABORATORS

VALERIE WEAK is an actor, teaching artist and gender parity advocate. She has worked at Shotgun Players, CenterREP, Word for Word, Marin Shakespeare Festival, and San Francisco Shakespeare Festival. She will play Lady Capulet in *Romeo and Juliet* for San Francisco Shakespeare in summer 2015. She founded the Counting Actors Project in 2011, and has logged playwright, director and actor data for over 500 Bay Area shows. She posts monthly project updates on the Works by Women San Francisco site.

MARTHA RICHARDS is the Founder/Executive Director of WomenArts, a worldwide community of artists and allies working to increase the visibility and opportunities for women artists. Through its website (WomenArts.org), WomenArts shares news about women artists, offers helpful resources, and coordinates Support Women Artists Now Day (SWAN Day), an international holiday celebrating women's creativity in all its forms. Prior to WomenArts, Richards served as Executive Director of Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College and as Managing Director of StageWest, a LORT theatre in Springfield, MA. She writes frequently on arts issues, and serves as Senior Strategist for Women Artists for the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, a coalition of nationally recognized arts activists.

CHRISTINE YOUNG is an Associate Professor at University of San Francisco and also works as a free-lance director specializing in new plays about social issues affecting women's lives. She has directed and taught for Tenderloin Opera Company, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Crowded Fire, Lunatique Fantastique, Shotgun Players, California Shakespeare Theater, Magic Theatre, New Conservatory Theater, TheatreWorks, San Francisco Shakespeare, Just Theater and Golden Thread Productions. She curates Works by Women San Francisco (worksbywomensf.wordpress.com) which spotlights theatrical work written, directed, designed and produced by women theater artists in the San Francisco/Bay Area. She serves on the board of WomenArts.

This report is available online at WomenArts.org/not-even/ along with a complete list of shows counted, additional data tables, and other gender parity resources