



Athena Project is a Colorado nonprofit that celebrates and nurtures women's artistic expression, working actively for equality of opportunity, recognition and pay based on artistic merit alone.

Athena Project's mission is to empower women and strengthen the Denver community through developing and showcasing women and girls' artistic contributions, while inviting new audiences into the creative process.

Executive Summary

Athena Project's 2017 Survey of Status of Women in Theatre in the Rocky Mountain Region

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Gender parity continues to be a significant issue across all social and economic sectors including the arts. Over the past several years multiple studies have been published examining the roles and participation of women in theatre across the United States. These studies—by organizations such as the Dramatist Guild, the League of Professional Women in Theatre, WomenArts, Los Angeles Female Playwrights Initiative, and Gender Parity Task Force Chicago—document that women are greatly underrepresented in theatres across the country as playwrights, directors, and managers.

Last year Denver's Athena Project began collecting its own data on the status of women in theatre across the Rocky Mountain Region (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NM, NV, UT, WY). As a non-profit empowering and encouraging female voices in the arts, Athena Project believes it important to look closely at what is happening with gender parity in its own Rocky Mountain Region in order to devise ways to better empower the female artists that it serves. The data collected for this survey adds to the research being done on small and vibrant theatre communities in medium and small sized cities across the U.S.

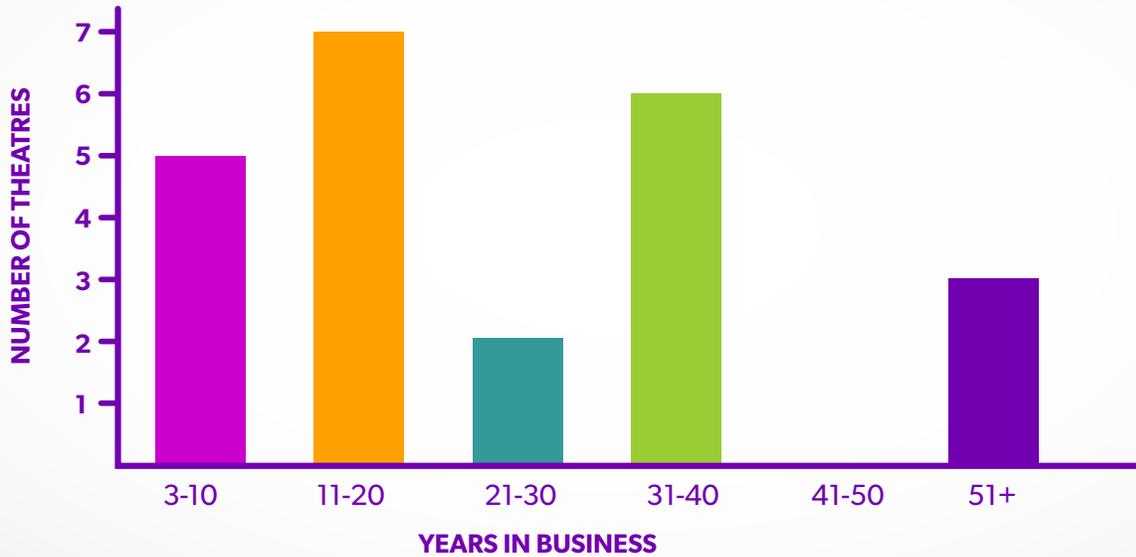
Working with researchers at Klein Buendel, Athena Project sent a survey to 120 theatres across the Rocky Mountain Region. We received information from just over 20% of the theatres that were sent the survey. The following criteria were used to determine if a theatre would be invited to participate in the survey:

- The theatre must stage at least 2 productions per season (season Sep 1–Aug 31).
- The theatre must stage at least 6 performances of each production.
- The theatre must have been in existence for at least 3 years.

These criteria are different from those used in other surveys because they include smaller theatres that are not included in larger national surveys. Athena Project understands that small to medium sized theatre companies play an active role in the life of theatre communities across the Rocky Mountain Region.

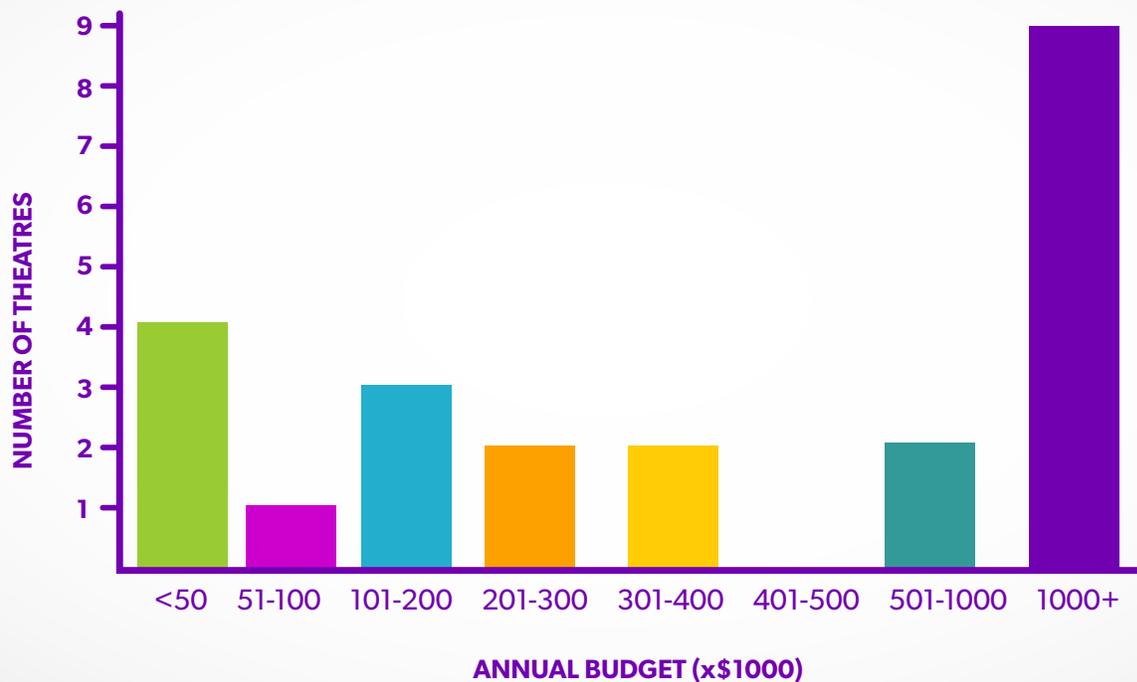
Here is a summary of our data on the years in business and annual budget of our survey responders:

HOW LONG THEATRES HAVE BEEN IN BUSINESS*



* Theatres that responded to survey

THEATRES' ANNUAL BUDGET



The 2017 survey continued our gathering of information about the gender and racial composition of theatre leadership as well as the gender and racial composition of the directors and playwrights produced. Additionally, the 2017 survey attempted to collect data on the financial compensation of theatre company leadership and accounted for artists who identify outside the gender binary. It is important to note that with only two years worth of data this report simply states findings and does not strive to point to overall trends. We hope that within a few years, by continuing to collect data, and by continuing to have more and more participants we can begin to point to overall trends within our region.

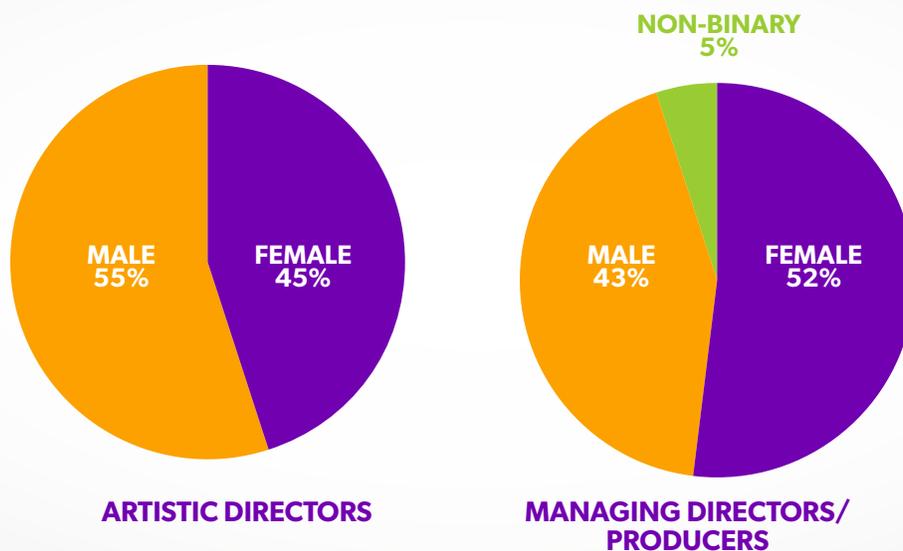
Artistic Directors and Managing Directors

The 2017 Athena Project survey shows a slight decrease in the number of women holding leadership positions within the Rocky Mountain Region. With only two years worth of data we cannot determine if this decrease reflects a trend. The decrease may be accounted for by the fact that different theatres responded this year than last. The data could also be affected by the fact that we included additional options for self identifying, in order to make our current survey more inclusive and more accurately reflect the identities of those leading our theatres.

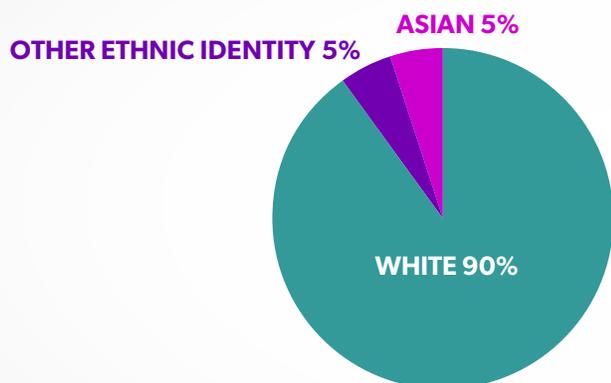
THEATRE PERSONNEL – PAID vs UNPAID



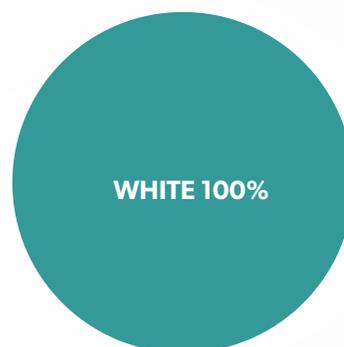
THEATRE LEADERSHIP BY GENDER IDENTITY



THEATRE LEADERSHIP BY ETHNIC IDENTITY



ARTISTIC DIRECTORS



**MANAGING DIRECTORS/
PRODUCERS**

It is encouraging to see that, in the theatres that responded to our survey, women make up nearly half of the people in leadership positions overall. While the 2017 survey collected information on financial compensation for individuals in theatre leadership, not enough theatres responded about the specifics of salary for us to accurately understand if people are being paid a living wage. Our data did show that 65% of Artistic Directors and 74% of Managing Directors/Producers are paid, which suggests that people in leadership positions are, to a certain extent, being compensated. It is interesting to note here that 9 of the 23 theatres that responded this year have a budget of over 1 million dollars, and that in these large budget theatres, people in leadership are being paid. Of the Artistic Directors in these 9 theatres, 3 are women. In future, we would like to gather more specific information to know what is happening in our smaller budget theatres with regard to pay.

In future iterations of the survey, and as funding becomes available, we may try to get more granular data on specific salaries and their relationship to the gender identity of the person employed. While we attempted this year to collect information on specific salary ranges we did not receive enough data to make conclusions. We will continue to gather information on this in order to determine not only the roles that women play in theatres across the region, but how they are compensated for this work.

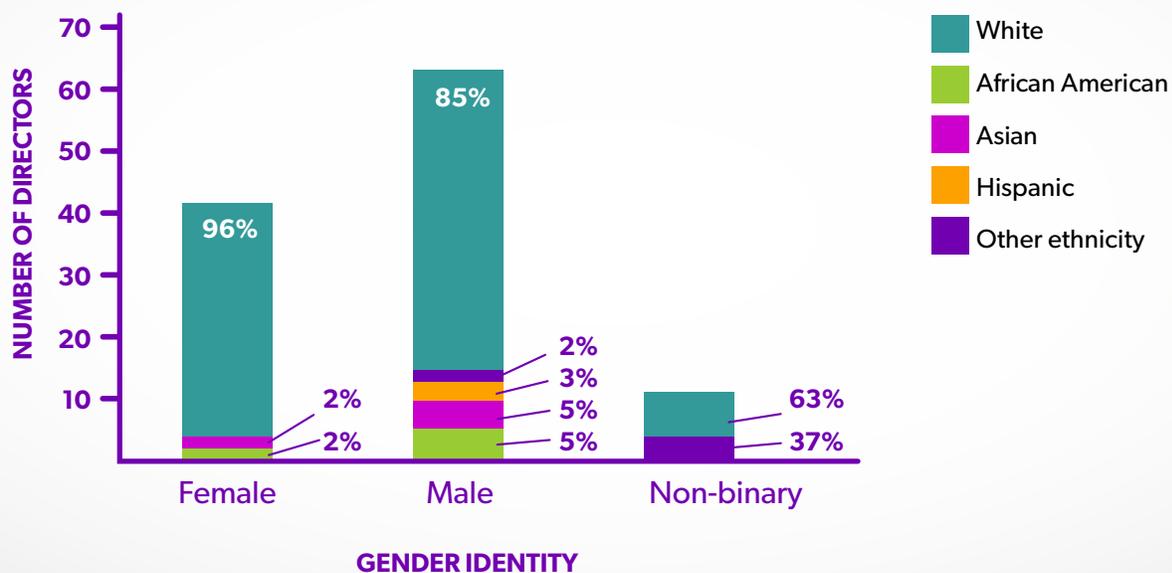
Most striking for the second year in a row, is the lack of diversity that is reflected in the data collected on theatre leadership. With only 10% of Artistic Directors and 0% of Managing Directors identifying as people of color, it is clear that within our region we need to do more to recruit and encourage diversity in our theatre leadership.

Playwrights and Directors

Both the 2016 and 2017 surveys did not account for unique productions, playwrights, or directors. This means that if three different theatres produced *Topdog/Underdog* by Suzan Lori Parks then each production was counted as a production by a female playwright of color, even though it is a production of a play by the same woman. Furthermore, if a company reported that they had three female directors during the season we counted that as three female directors being used, even if one of the same directors directed two different shows. The reason for counting in this way is that in this particular survey we did not collect data on the specific plays that

were produced or who the specific director was for each play; we only asked for numbers of productions, playwrights, and directors. Again, as funding becomes available for future surveys we may move to this more granular accumulation of data. It is also of note that some companies reported different data points for number of directors, playwrights, and productions. For example one company reported 68 non unique productions, 7 playwrights, and 0 directors. This tells us that with our current data we cannot account for a one to one ratio for productions, playwrights, and directors. However, we can look at each category individually and from the data given begin to extrapolate information about the gender and racial identities of the playwrights produced and directors working in our theatres. Finally, because of the way that we counted—by not looking at unique productions, directors, and playwrights—the numbers we have calculated may portray a more equitable reality than actually exists.

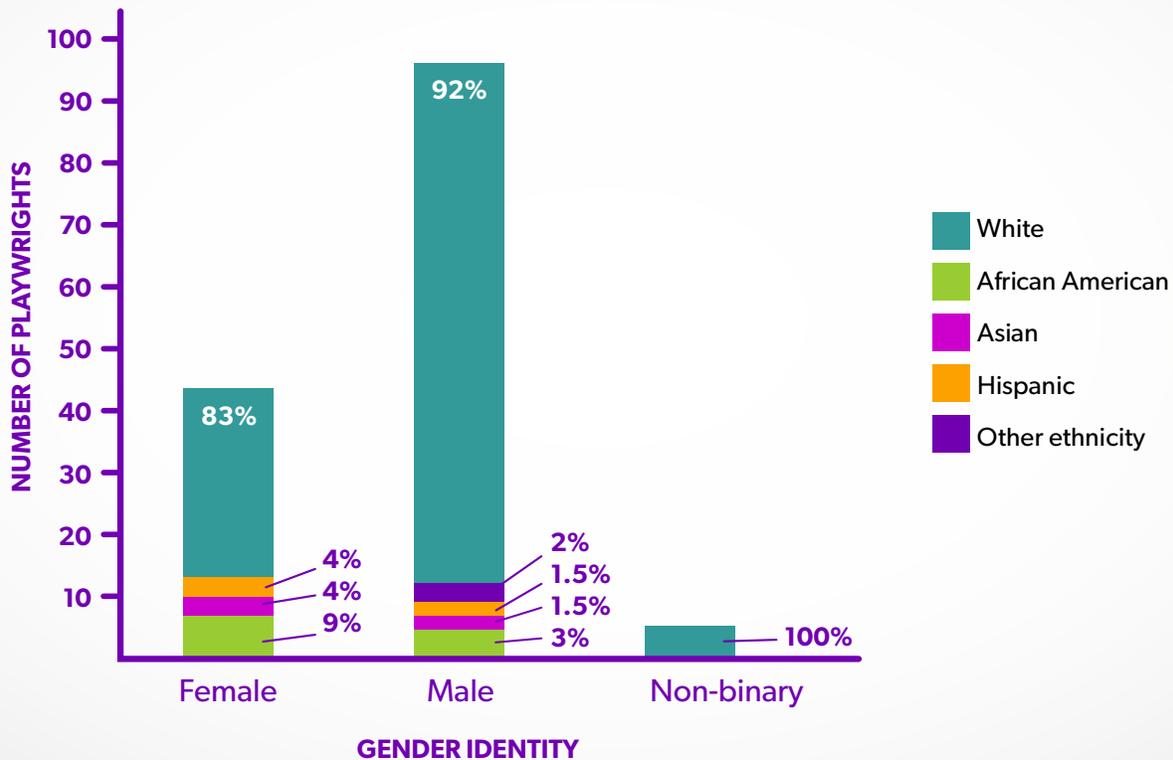
DIRECTORS BY GENDER AND ETHNIC IDENTITY



We applaud what appears to be an increase in the production of the works of female playwrights over the past year. We hope to see this carry forward as a trend. The 2017 Athena Project survey suggests that there has been a slight decrease in the use of female directors. Again, with only two years of data this change does not necessarily reflect a trend and may point to the differences in the theatres responding or to our more inclusive options for better representing the gender identities of playwrights and directors. We will continue to track these numbers and within a few years should be able to make a more accurate assessment on the overall state of the production of plays by female playwrights and the number of employed female directors.

Similarly to the 2016 findings, the 2017 survey suggests that people of color, and women of color in particular, are drastically underrepresented. As previously noted this is especially true for women in positions of leadership. According to the census bureau within the Rocky Mountain Region, 34% of the population identifies as a person of color. The Athena Project survey suggests that roughly 16% of playwrights and 8% of people in artistic leadership positions are people of color. This percentage is even lower for women of color. What is clear from this data is that people of color make up a significant portion of the population in the Rocky Mountain Region—however, this is not proportionately reflected in the production of plays by people of color or in the hiring of people of color to lead our artistic communities.

PLAYWRIGHTS BY GENDER AND ETHNIC IDENTITY



Due to the lack of diversity that was highlighted in last year’s survey and continues to be highlighted this year, Athena Project has taken steps to work to change this situation. Athena Project participated in the diversity discussions hosted in the fall of 2016 by Curious Theatre Company in Denver. We participated in the Denver Mayor’s Office Gender Equity Summit, and continue to support The Women’s Foundation’s efforts to create a more equitable community for all women including women of color. Athena Project hosted conversations with female music executives of color at Swallow Hill Music and we have worked hard to re-think diversity in our own programming. The data from this year’s survey tells us that there is more to be done with regards to creating theatre communities that reflect our larger communities. This coming year we commit to continuing our efforts to create opportunities for artist of color, engaging in discussion on gender and race equity, and supporting a diverse range of artists within our community. These efforts will also include supporting bodies of various abilities as well.

We feel encouraged that our efforts to create a more inclusive arts community are supported by others. This is made clear to us by the fact that participants in this year’s survey commented that they consciously strive to hire diverse actors/directors and that they work to produce plays by women of color. They noted encouragement of seeking diversity in their audition notices and hire actors from across the US in some cases to do so. We hope that these efforts, and others, continue and that we will see their results reflected in the data collected by future surveys. For this to happen we must all work towards increase the number of female voices presented on stage and leading our theatres. During the 2016 Statera Conference at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Athena Project led a key discussion for establishing recommendations for how we may proceed in creating more equitable theatre communities throughout our region.

From this discussion the following action points were created and they continue to be relevant:

- Establish the realistic goal that, while gender and racial parity will not happen overnight, with small steps we will continue to push forward our vision of an equitable world.
- Buy tickets to shows written and/or directed by women and women of color. Take a friend with you. This shows support for female artists.
- Do not buy tickets to theatres that continually lack diversity (on and off the stage) in their programming. This indicates to producers that we want to see more diversity.
- Challenge directors to cast cross culturally, no matter the production. This means looking at work, including pieces from the American Classical Canon, that features the best actor for the job. For example, Big Daddy in a local production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* by Tennessee Williams was played by a black man even though the rest of the cast was white. It wasn't because the production was boasting an interracial marriage, it was because the actor playing Big Daddy was the best candidate for the job.
- Petition your legislators to support the arts so that there is more funding that can be distributed to women. It is only with more funding that arts organizations will be able to sustain themselves and pay the artists that work for them.
- Build alliances with sister organizations in order to share resources, ideas, and support. This produces a strong network of like-minded artists.
- Develop a code of conduct for equity in hiring and pay. This ensures that artists are hired and paid fairly across the board.
- Develop mentorship opportunities for young women. This develops and supports young artists. It also helps to build a community where female artists feel valued and safe.
- Partner with educational institutions (elementary, secondary and postsecondary) in order to teach the history and significance of women's voices in the arts. By teaching students about the history and significance of women's voices in the arts we establish an awareness of the historical and current struggles as well as a framework for thinking about the place of women in the art world.

We are excited to spearhead this research because we want the Rocky Mountain theatre region to exemplify growth and progress in the area of gender and racial equality. We want our theatres to reflect the beautiful diversity in our community. As we look to the future of this survey, Athena Project plans to continue working to gather more accurate data not only on gender and race but also on access for artists with disabilities, the significance of age, and further questions about the inclusion of members of our LGBTQ communities. In order to gather this information we need your continued support—our statistics rely on candid and complete input from our respondents. We welcome your suggestions about how we might continue to provide information that tracks our growth.

Special thanks to Klein Buendel for sponsoring this survey and Gina Walker and Charlotte Bassin for putting finishing touches on it. Athena Project's mission is to empower women and strengthen the Denver community through developing and showcasing women and girls' artistic contributions, while inviting new audiences into the creative process. For more information, please visit www.AthenaProjectArts.org.

Resources:

The Count. Dramatists Guild National Study. Julia Jordan & Rebecca Stump. 2015.
www.dramatistsguild.com/media/PDFs/TheCount.pdf

Not Even: A Study of Gender Parity in Bay Area Theatres. Valerie Week, Martha Richards, and Christine Young. 2014.
www.womenarts.org/not-even/http://www.dramatistsguild.com/media/PDFs/TheCount.pdf

Who Designs in LORT Theatres by Gender. Infographic. Porsche McGovern. 2015.
<http://howlround.com/who-designs-in-lort-theatres-by-gender>

Who Designs and Directs in LORT Theatres by Gender: Phase Two. Porsche McGovern. 2016.
<http://howlround.com/who-designs-and-directs-in-lort-theatres-by-gender-phase-two>

Why Are There So Few Women Leading Theatres and What Can Be Done About It? Sumru Erkut and Ineke Ceder. 2015.
<http://howlround.com/why-are-there-so-few-women-leading-theatres-and-what-can-be-done-about-it>

Women Count: Women Hired Off Broadway 2010–2015. League of Professional Theatre Women. Wade Steketee and Judith Binus. 2015.
<http://theatrewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Women-Count-2015-Report.pdf>

Women's Leadership: Research Results and Recommendations. Sumru Erkut and Ineke Ceder. 2016.
<http://howlround.com/women-s-leadership-research-results-and-recommendations>

Other resources and survey findings can be found at WomenArts.org.
www.womenarts.org/womens-employment-in-the-arts/

Athena Project. <http://www.AthenaProjectArts.org>



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