

Chicago Storefront Summit: report from Gender Equity Task Force

March 22, 2010

A group of participants in the Chicago Storefront Summit has been working to create a snapshot of recent gender equality conditions in the Chicago theatre community by collecting and analyzing local data.

Methodology

TimeOut Chicago provided information on all their theatre event listings from 2009: a total of 1113 listings. Margo Gray (Prologue Theatre Co.) and Tony Adams (Halcyon Theatre) developed guidelines for coding each listing according to author gender and production type. Sketch and improv shows, cabarets, variety shows, staged readings, festivals, scene showcases, burlesques, remounts of a production from the same year, and one-night engagements were separated out for further analysis, and are not included in these statistics.

Eight categories were used for coding author gender for each listing:

- Female (including multiple authors, all female)
- Male (including multiple authors, all male)
- Mixed authorship (majority female)
- Mixed authorship (majority male)
- Mixed authorship (equal gender split)
- Trans or other gender
- Devised/ensemble created
- Author gender unknown

For the batch of productions analyzed here, no listings fell into the following categories: Trans or other gender or Author gender unknown. Statistics are provided for a total of 703 listings that fell into the remaining 6 categories.

Preliminary Findings (also see attached charts)

Plays written by women (either one woman or a group of all women) constituted 18.8% of plays produced in Chicago in 2009. If you include all plays that had any input from a women (assuming that all ensemble-created works included contributions from at least one woman) the number is still only 30%. This means that 70% of the stories audiences saw on Chicago stages last year were written from an exclusively male point of view.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of productions</i>	<i>Percentage of total productions</i>
Plays by one man (or a team of only men)	492	70%
Plays by one woman (or a team of only women)	132	19%
Plays by a team of men and women (mostly men)	11	8%
Plays by a team of men and women (mostly women)	1	0%
Plays by a team of men and women (equal gender split)	26	4%
Devised or ensemble created work	41	6%

This data puts Chicago roughly in line with recent statistics from New York theaters and from Theatre Communications Group member theatres, which found that between 17%¹ and 20%² of plays produced by those groups are written by women.

¹ Wilner, Jordan and Sheri Wilner. "Discrimination and The Female Playwright." *The Dramatist*, (Sept-Oct 2009).

<http://www.giarts.org/article/discrimination-and-female-playwright>

Data provided by Time Out Chicago from all event listings in 2009. Coded by volunteers from the Chicago Storefront Summit Gender Equity Task Force and analyzed by Margo Gray (Prologue Theatre Co.)

Further analysis

TimeOut Chicago has made available listings data dating back to 2005. Volunteers from the Gender Equity Task Force will continue to organize this data with the goal of analyzing trends in playwright gender representation over the past five years. Other projects will include trends in gender equity for directors and designers. We also hope to classify producing organizations by budget size in order to break down percentages of female playwrights produced for each budget category. Any person wishing to become involved with the future efforts of this group should contact Margo Gray (margo@prologuetheatreco.org) or Tony Adams (tony@halcyontheatre.org).

Other projects of the Gender Equity Task Force

Gender equality in organizational leadership: How many women helm Chicago theatre companies, and what effect does that representation have on the community?

The League of Chicago Theaters provided a list of all women who hold the position of executive director, artistic director, managing director, or a similar leadership position in a League company. Fifty-eight (58) companies made the list, out of approximately 190 League members. That means 31% of League members have a woman in one of their top leadership positions. Breaking out only the current female Artistic Directors of League members, we find twenty-nine (29) women serving as the artistic leaders of their companies, or 15% of League members. Coincidentally, this is the same percentage of women who served as CEOs of Fortune 500 companies in 2008, but below the figure for the nation's 400 largest nonprofits, 19% of which have a female serving as CEO³.

To-do list

Other suggestions that came out of a January meeting of the Task Force include the following:

- Increase women's participation in mentoring by playwrights, designers, company leaders, and others (taking advantage of existing League offerings or setting up informal mentoring opportunities).
- Institute policies of blind readings for new play submissions, similar to blind auditions held by orchestras.
- Gather statistics on what audiences want to see more of, not what we think they want to see.
- Create a diversity report card for area theaters. Bring visibility to the disparity and highlight those who are doing good work in achieving parity.
- Partner with schools in the community to engage young people in theatre by women.
- Create a festival of work by women, or collaborate around existing festivals.
- Market or package gender-equitable programming in a collective way.
- Examine mission statements to find ways to include equality. Could several companies collaborate on a year-long exploration of gender equity?

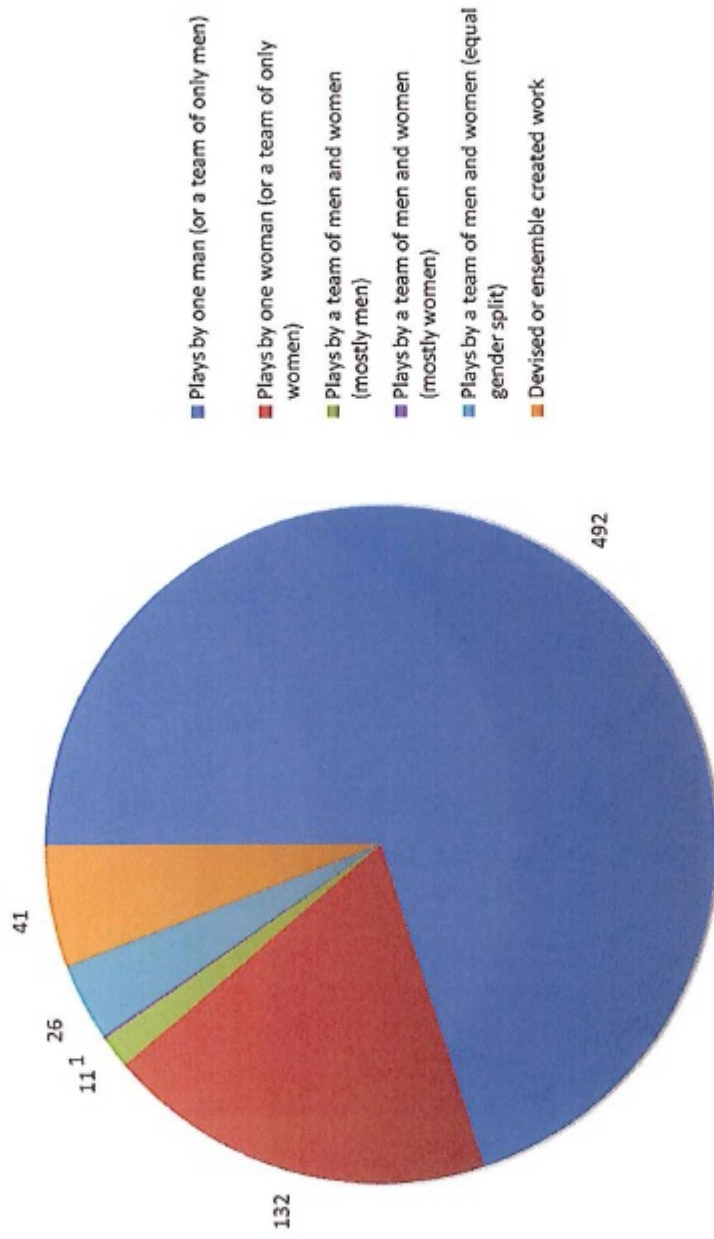
The Gender Equity Task Force will meet again this spring to continue work on these and other projects. Watch the Chicago Storefront Summit Facebook page for announcements, or e-mail Margo Gray (margo@prologuetheatreco.org) or Jenn Adams (jenn@halcyontheatre.org) to get involved.

² Jonas, Susan and Suzanne Bennett. "Report on the Status of Women: a limited engagement?" New York State Council on the Arts Theatre Program (January 2002). <http://www.womenarts.org/advocacy/WomenCountNYSCARreport.htm>

³ Joslyn, Heather. "A Man's World." *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. (September 17, 2009). <http://philanthropy.com/article/A-Mans-World/57099/>.

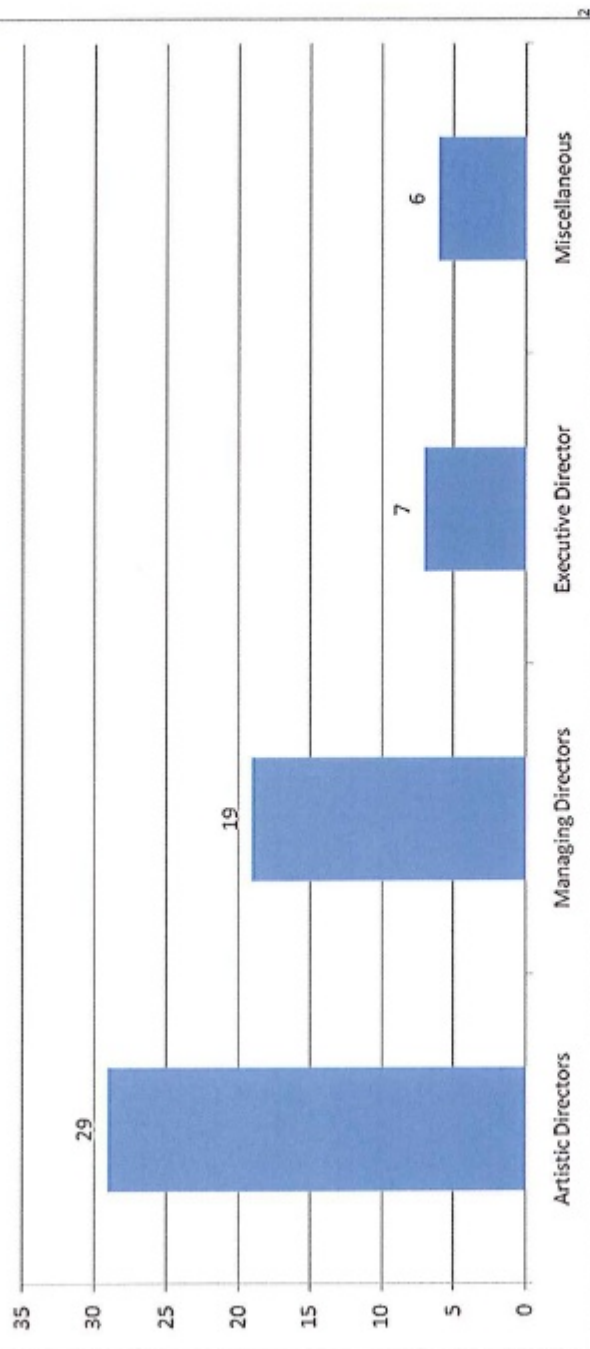
Data provided by Time Out Chicago from all event listings in 2009. Coded by volunteers from the Chicago Storefront Summit Gender Equity Task Force and analyzed by Margo Gray (Prologue Theatre Co.)

Author gender for plays produced in Chicago 2009



¹ Data provided by Time Out Chicago from all event listings in 2009. Coded by volunteers from the Chicago Storefront Summit Gender Equity Task Force and analyzed by Margo Gray (Prologue Theatre Co.)

Women in leadership positions at companies in League of Chicago Theaters



These statistics were provided by the League of Chicago Theaters. The League has approximately 190 members. Therefore women constitute 15% of League Artistic Directors and 10% of Managing Directors. This data tell us that 58 companies (31% of League members) have a woman in a leadership position, though because theatre organizations vary in structure, it is difficult to determine if the leadership positions listed are equivalent to each other or how they compare to job titles at other organizations.

² Miscellaneous job titles include President, Vice President, Producer, Theatre Manager, and General Manager.

