

MIND THE GENDER GAP

A major study has found that women are massively under-represented in theatre. **Joe Shellard** from data analysts Purple Seven unpacks the research.

Purple Seven collected information from the programmes of over 6,000 productions across 159 UK venues between 2012 and 2014 to look at the gender gap on the other side of the curtain. Across all of these productions, 65% of the audience was female, but only 39% of casts, 28% of playwrights, and 36% of directors were female.

With women receiving theatrical accolades left right and centre and several high-profile announcements in the last few weeks; Denise Gough's support of the '50:50 by 2018' campaign and Rufus Norris' commitment to gender equality by 2021, we wanted to understand how much of an issue this is.

Purple Seven helps theatres to understand the age, gender, ethnicity and disability status of their audiences using Instant Demographic Profile Reports and Automatic Post-Show Email Surveys. Our Automatic Email Surveys are the UK's largest survey of UK theatregoers, so we knew that by using them in combination with newspaper reviews and Box Office sales we could begin to understand women's role in theatre.

Looking specifically at plays, we matched data across three different data sources: lists of contributors for 6,000 plays, a set of reviews from the Guardian and the Telegraph, and our own Box Office database covering 70% of UK ticket sales across over 200 UK theatres.

We found that plays directed by men tended to sell more tickets over the course of their run, and also generate more revenue. However, male directors were generally given bigger stages, with tickets

being sold at higher prices than those of their female peers. When looking at the percentage of seats a performance managed to sell, the gap narrows and female directors slightly surpass males, with an average 53% of capacity sold compared to male directors' 51%. Play authorship tells a similar story; plays by men are given longer runs with higher average ticket prices.

The majority of male performers are in large part due to the predominance of male playwrights; we found that playwrights tend to write more parts for actors of their own gender, with women taking 37% of parts written by men and 62% of parts written by women.

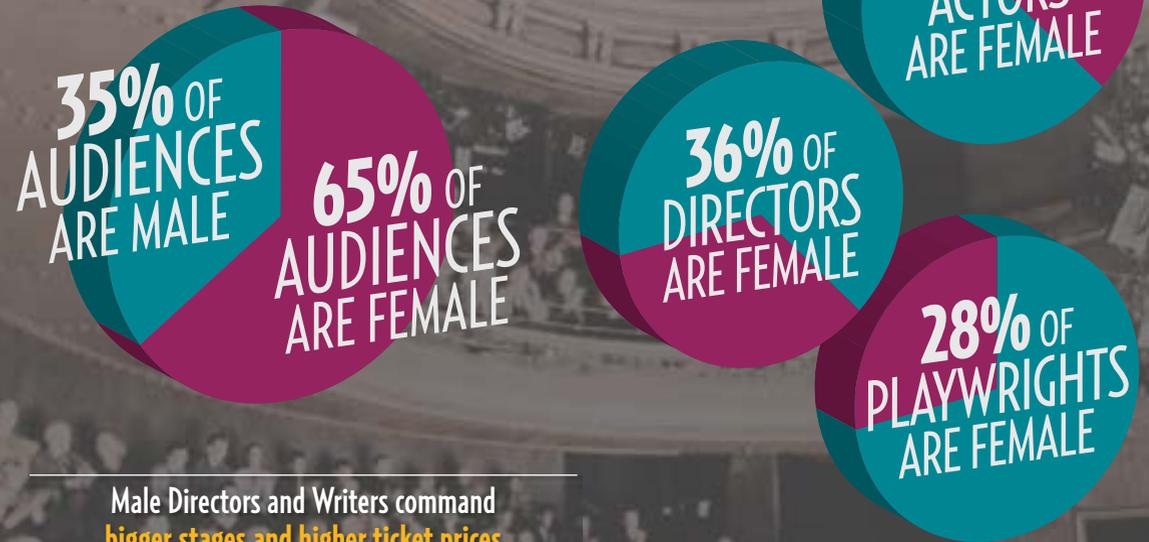
As the conversation around the theatrical gender gap continues, female directors have become more established, directing 39% of plays in 2015, compared to just 34% in 2012. Female playwriting is also on the up, albeit in a less steady trajectory; 2015 has been a better year for the female playwrights representing 32% of productions, a significant jump on 2014's 27%. Casting, however, remains static; in 2015, as in 2012, women took up just 39% of stage roles.

It is clear that the industry has a long way to go if we are truly to give equal representation to men and women. We are relying on the sector giving a voice to female writers, supporting upcoming directors, and handing a stage to the next generation of female performers.

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HOW WIDE IS THE GAP?

How much work needs to be done to close the gap?



Male Directors and Writers command bigger stages and higher ticket prices

The proportion of female directors has increased by 5% since 2012

Playwrights write more parts for actors of their own gender.

Women take 37% of parts written by men
Women take 62% of parts written by women

	DIRECTOR		PLAYWRIGHT	
	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE
Venue Capacity	327	533	376	505
Capacity of Run	2,372	3,754	1,520	4,356
Seats Sold	1,040	1,474	526	1,729
% of Seats Sold	53%	51%	47%	53%
Price of Ticket	10.88	14.51	11.68	13.28

OVERVIEW:

- Women are given smaller stages than men
- Three times as many seats are sold for plays written by men, than those by women
- Ticket prices at shows directed by men are £4 higher than those by women

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Information is extracted from Purple Seven's Women in Theatre report using data from its Demographic Profiler Report and Automatic Feedback Surveys. Purple Seven works with theatres to understand audiences and find new customers, using its knowledge of 6 million UK theatregoers across 250 UK venues.