



Theater Mu celebrates and empowers Asian Americans through theater.

Approach and impact



" Mu has meant everything to me. It's my artistic home; I consider the artists there to be my brothers and sisters. People don't realize how rare Theater Mu is. I think of myself first and foremost as an actor. I went to college and studied white theater methods, and that's the extent of how theater was taught to me. It did not prepare me as an artist of color in the theater."

-Mu artist

" When you're still developing as an adult, you need something to ground yourself in. You need someplace where you feel that you are listened to, heard, and respected. Mu did that for me. Mu was a place away from home where I felt at home. Nobody asked me where I came from. I came to Mu with the experience that I am 'other.' But at Mu I wasn't."

-Mu audience member

" Seeing a Mu production made me as a white person really aware that when I go to theater I see people that look like me, and I wasn't aware of how much of a privilege that is. I took that for granted. It also made me realize how much of a privilege it is to tell your own story as an artist, and that there aren't many opportunities like that for non-white actors."

-Mu audience member

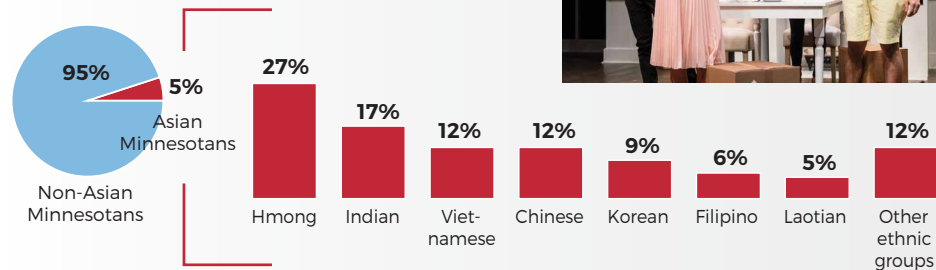
THEATER MU'S APPROACH

Theater Mu is part of and serves the Asian American community, and is based in Minnesota. The Asian Minnesotan community makes up five percent of Minnesota's overall population and is ethnically diverse, including more than 30 ethnic groups.¹ The largest of these groups are Hmong, Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, Filipino, and Laotian.² There are many more Asian ethnic groups in Minnesota and Mu's mission compels the organization to represent the Asian Minnesotan community as a whole.

Theater Mu's work is grounded in the Asian American experience.

In service to the Asian Minnesotan community

ASIAN COMMUNITIES IN MINNESOTA



Dedicated to telling Asian American stories

Mu is committed to providing opportunities for Asian Minnesotans to tell their stories as well as to see and hear a story like theirs on stage. This is vitally important considering the lack of representation of Asian Americans in media and theater. For example, from 2015-2016, only seven percent of broadcast, cable, and digital platform television shows included an Asian American series regular.³ Likewise, from 2006-2016, only four percent of actors cast by Broadway and nonprofit theaters in New York City were Asian American (similar demographic information about Minnesota theater artists is unavailable).^{1,4}

¹ From the 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

² The Economic Status of Minnesotans. Minnesota State Demographic Center. 2016.

³ Tokens on the Small Screen: Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders on Prime Time and Streaming Television. Cristina B. Chin, et al. 2016.

⁴ Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages. The Asian American Performers Action Coalition. 2016.

THEATER MU'S IMPACT



What does Theater Mu do?

THEATER PRODUCTIONS

Mu commissions and produces new plays by Asian American playwrights, produces plays of the Asian canon, and produces plays of the non-Asian canon cast with Asian American actors. Some of these productions are in partnership with other theaters.

Mu does...

- 4 full productions every year
- 3 one-off productions every year
- 45-60 performances every year

EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Mu partners with schools, corporations, libraries, community centers, and other kinds of organizations to educate and engage using theater. In each of these settings, Mu uses theater approaches to help their partners achieve their goals as well as teaches theater skills to students, employees, or constituents. In addition to partnering with others to provide education and engagement opportunities, Mu does its own theater arts trainings for Asian American artists.

Mu does...

- 1-5 residencies every year at partner organizations; each residency includes 20-50 education or engagement hours
- 5-10 outreach performances or presentations every year at partner organizations; each outreach performance or presentation is about one hour
- 5-10 arts or leadership trainings every year; each training includes 2-3 hours of instruction

DIVERSITY AND REPRESENTATION

Theater Mu is committed to representing the diversity of the Asian Minnesotan community, and regularly hires actors from diverse Asian ethnic backgrounds as well as produces plays written by diverse Asian American playwrights. Likewise, Minnesota is 80 percent white, and these statewide demographics are reflected in the Minnesota theater community (Mu is one of the few Asian American theater companies of more than 500 theaters statewide, according to the Minnesota Theater Alliance). By rooting their work in the Asian Minnesotan community, Theater Mu provides a degree of diversity to the Minnesota theater community.

" Mu is not only changing perception but changing practice. Mu not only casts Asian American actors in their own productions, but they also say to white theaters that they need embrace the idea of casting diversely, too. They say they need to embrace the idea that race is germain not only to story-telling but to the politics of how you run your business. To Mu, diversity is the baseline."

-Mu artist

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Theater Mu artfully confronts social issues head-on; its leadership and artists are well-versed at using theater to highlight social injustices and amplify the voices and stories of people who have been systemically oppressed or disenfranchised. Theater Mu is particularly attentive to stories of injustice that are meaningful to the Asian American community.

" Mu doesn't hold back. I remember a piece that was so healing and challenging for me that we had a lot of discussion about it with my friends after the piece. I told others that they have to see this. It was such an important piece. I told them it is one of the most important political pieces you'll see this year."

-Mu audience member

ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

Theater Mu helps to develop the knowledge, skills, and careers of Asian American artists through casting primarily Asian American actors, commissioning new plays from Asian American playwrights, building relationships between Asian American artists, showcasing Asian American artists within the Minnesota theater community, and connecting Asian American artists in meaningful ways to other theaters in Minnesota.

" Career-wise, I was told in high school by my beloved theater teacher that if you want to pursue acting as a career, prepare yourself to play old people and character roles because as an Asian person you will never be considered as a leading lady. Theater Mu allowed me to train as a leading woman. I was given lead parts for the first time. I was able to find my voice as a powerful, sexy, fully embodied, complex human being. Through Mu's mentorship I wrote a piece that got me into some prestigious theater programs. I could not have done that without Mu."

-Mu artist

What is the impact of Theater Mu's work?

FOR ASIAN AMERICAN AUDIENCES

- Increased cultural self-awareness
- Deeper connections to other Asian Americans
- Increased feelings of belonging

FOR AUDIENCES THAT ARE NOT ASIAN AMERICAN

- Increased awareness of Asian American perspectives
- Increased cultural self-awareness
- Increased commitment to social justice issues

FOR PRODUCTION PARTNERS

- Increased awareness of Asian American perspectives
- More connections with Asian American artists
- Increased commitment to telling stories from diverse perspectives

FOR ASIAN AMERICAN ARTISTS

- Deeper knowledge of theater arts
- Improved theater arts skills
- Enhanced connections with Asian American artists

- More exposure within the Minnesota theater community
- Increased awareness of cultural strengths
- Increased theater arts career opportunities

FOR STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES, AND CONSTITUENTS

- Improved public speaking skills
- Improved self-confidence and self-esteem
- Increased body awareness and body language skills

- Improved story-telling skills
- Increased awareness of cultural strengths
- Increased feelings of belonging
- Improved English language skills

FOR CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Increased knowledge of arts-based engagement methods
- Improved relationship with employees or constituents



theater mu



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