

Friends and countryfolk, lend us your ears.

It's March, so it's high time for another heart to heart. Imma keep it simple because attention spans are low and the urgency is high.

Theatre industry, this one's for you.

While we ain't into telling folks what to do, we got a few thoughts on things going down in our sector and here's:

Stage A Change's top 3 list of NO MORE IN 2024!

NO MORE BLAMING AUDIENCES

If people aren't coming to your theatre, they're not buying your tickets, they're not telling their friends...babes, it's probably not them, it's you.

I recently listened to a panel where not one, but THREE producers lamented the challenges of the [Audience Outlook Monitor](#) survey which said, in a nutshell, that to respond to today's audiences you have to find a way to create authentic access, reduce ticket prices and lower fees. (It also said almost 50% of folks are looking for something to splash or spend money on...but who's reading.) They were frustrated with the venue, the platforms, the economy, the processes, the data, but I heard nary a mention of things like:

- "Maybe we could be more accessible to new audiences"
- "Perhaps we could invest in creating reciprocal relationships with communities that have been underrepresented"
- "Let's dig deeper to understand why theatre, specifically the work we choose, has historically not been of interest,"
- "We're curious about what barriers are preventing meaningful connection and how we can remove them."
- "Maybe, since we're in a different time and want different people we should, like, do some different stuff."

People aren't coming to your shows because **they haven't been invited**. Opening your doors is different from sending an invitation. There is something in the way and those barriers, whether real or perceived, are not their job to fix.

NO MORE ARTIST SHAMING

ESPECIALLY not artists of colour!

So good job - in the 7 years we've been around, based on entirely anecdotal and individually reported data, we've seen an increase of representation of artists of colour on stages across the spectrum - commercial, independent, and state theatres. But in reality, it means that **the 20 or so actors who were working before 2020 are already booked**. Actually, they more likely moved into film or tv where they can stay at home or be flewed out (SIC) and not have to bust their butt 8 shows a week only to be microaggressed in their dressing room or at the stage door...again.

Or maybe they've gotten really picky about the work they take - because they can. **They're in demand and they're busy.**

And for the hundreds of actors who are FINALLY getting a shot (ie, getting an audition without needing a top tier agent to go to bat for them) they are bending over backwards for the one role that's been "earmarked for diversity" and out here doing 6 auditions that all fall in the same week, because that's how it always works, where each audition has 7 songs, 12 pages of sides, 3 dance combinations and, whether it's true or not, then come into the room feeling like you're just LOOKING for a reason to say no, so you can cast the same 30 people you always do. **Pitting 4 historically underrepresented artists against each other for a role that none of them is probably going to get is exhausting.**

If the folks you were hoping for are not coming into your room, **take a look at your last 5 cast lists.** Where do you see diversity of age, body size, gender, race, ethnicity, accent in roles that are not specific to identity? On average?

Are we talking 25%? 2%?

If you were me, how long would you do that to yourself?

We're tired, we're sick of being bamboozled, and we're done wasting our time when we see how you play the game.

NO MORE SITTING, WAITING, AND WISHING

If you want change, use your POWER and your POCKETBOOK to change it!

For the love, can we please leave behind these same tired tropes that absolve you of responsibility?

"But there aren't that many..." "I don't think they can't do a full run of shows a week..."

"The international creatives didn't approve..." "Australian audiences love tried and true talent..."

"But we're just independent theatre..." etc etc etc.

Look, there is some truth to some of that - cuz we've been there. Not everyone can do everything. Not everyone you love will be approved by all stakeholders. Not everyone you want will be available when you are ready to audition. When everyone wants to do shows that require specificity of identity, it might be harder to find the right people.

But you wanna see an improvement in the talent coming in the door - **show me your investment in the pipeline.** You wanna see a change in how audiences show up for your shows - let me see your work in community engagement (NOT audience development). You want to not be cancelled - let's see you choosing inclusive, non-incendiary language to speak about humans in a way that doesn't incite the comment section to look [like this](#). If you want artists to have a great experience working with you, create systems and structures to ensure their wellbeing that are more than a tick box. And if you can't do it, hire someone who will. **The power, resources, positionality and spaces you inhabit are mighty, please USE THEM for good.** If you build it and they don't come, look in the mirror and make that change.

TL;DR - Call us. Call somebody. Don't be out here looking foolish.