

## **State of the Artists Looking at TCG's 2011 State of the Artists Survey**

For 35 years, TCG has consistently tracked and measured data about theatre organizations, but had not yet undertaken a large-scale study focusing on artists and theatres. In her November 2009 *American Theatre* column titled "[Measurements](#)," TCG executive director Teresa Eyring wrote, "Of all the studies in the theatre community, those dealing with fiscal and audience data tend to be the ones undertaken year in and year out. We don't have perennial mechanisms to quantify and discuss progress on qualitative and values-related questions, such as: Is the field making concrete progress on matters of diversity and inclusion? Are artists satisfied with the work they are doing? Are theatres effective in engaging their communities around the issues that concern them most? Have we made progress on the question of how artists sustain a life in the theatre? What are the organizational structures at play in our field today? Are we taking enough risks?"

In late January 2011, the State of the Artists Survey, developed with Washington, D.C.–based researcher Mark Shugoll, was distributed to just over 7,000 individual artists working in the professional not-for-profit theatre. An additional group of artists was reached through partnerships with [Actors' Equity Association](#), [the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society](#), [United Scenic Artists](#), [Dramatists Guild](#), [Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas](#), [the Network of Ensemble Theatres](#) and regionally based service organizations. The survey included questions about work life, compensation issues, artists' relationships with organizations and demographics, and close to 1,600 artists (actors, directors, designers, playwrights, dramaturgs, and multi-disciplinary) responded.

### **The profile of this group of artists shows:**

- 51% are male and 49% female
- 73% are members of artists' unions
- 49% held graduate or professional degrees
- 3% are under 25 years old; 23% are between 25 and 34; 24% are 35–44; 22% are 45–54; 21% are 55–64; and the remaining 7% are 65 or older
- 50% have been working for 20-plus years and 8% for 5 years or less
- 49% work with a traditional approach and 29% with an alternative aesthetic
- 40% are residing in the Mid-Atlantic region; 22% in the West; 11% in the Midwest; 10% in the Mountain-Plains; 9% in New England; and 8% in the Southeast
- 86% are Caucasian; 4% African-American; 3% Hispanic/Latino; 2% Asian American; 2% mixed race; 1% Native American; 1% Pacific Islander; and 1% other

### **Key Findings**

- Median artistic income for those surveyed is \$39,600. Almost a quarter (24%) of the artists surveyed earn less than \$25,000, while 18% make \$75,000 or more. For context, the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) median income (from their [May 2010 Occupational Employment Statistics Survey](#)) for the total labor force was

- \$33,840. The OES survey is conducted semi-annually and covers all full-time and part-time wage and salary workers in non-farm industries.
- 16% of the artists feel they live a reasonable lifestyle from their career as an artist, while 58% say it is extremely challenging to support themselves as an artist. Many more artists based in a theatre organization (35%) say they lead a reasonable lifestyle than non-theatre-based artists (10%). The only artistic category where over 20% say they have a reasonable lifestyle are artists who also teach in higher education.
  - Theatre artists must supplement their income from outside the arts. On average, the percent of income from theatre work is only 42%. When adding income from other artistic disciplines, the average percentage of income from the arts is still just 54%. The leading sources of income outside theatre are teaching (40%), non-arts-related jobs (37%) and personal sources, including the income of a partner or personal savings (44%). Approximately one in three (32%) say their single greatest source of income is theatre jobs. Over one in five (21%) say it is from non-arts jobs.
  - Factors making it most challenging to live a satisfactory lifestyle as a theatre artist are pay scales for artists (81%), theatre budget cuts in today's economy (79%), too few jobs (76%), cost of healthcare (67%), no formal retirement plan (63%) and cost of housing (62%). Factors making it most challenging to do their best work are that it's hard to get a job without knowing the right people (68%), production budgets are not adequate (47%) and having to work too many non-artistic jobs (45%).
  - Most artists have consistent access to health insurance (75%), although more purchase it themselves (37%) or get it through a partner (20%), rather than through a union (18%) or theatre (10%). Two of three (66%) have a retirement plan, although it could be self-funded. Few have disability insurance (29%).
  - A non-theatre-based artist's life is often lived on the road. In a typical year, 42% work in three or more cities, while 14% work in five or more.
  - Based on the percentage strongly agreeing, these views are widely shared by theatre artists: theatres can benefit financially by deepening their relationships with artists (82%); they would be willing to devote more time to mentoring young artists (74%); they would like to be a full-time theatre-based artist (74%); they would like more professional development opportunities (73%); when working at a theatre, they would be willing to do outreach that helps the theatre and the field (68%); and often they can't see colleagues' work because tickets are too expensive (48%). By comparison, the percentage of those theatre artists strongly agreeing to the following is much smaller: they are fully satisfied with the quality of work they create given the challenges (46%); they find most relationships with theatres creatively satisfying (45%); they believe theatres want freelance artists to feel ownership of the art they create (36%); and they are satisfied with the amount of time they can devote to their craft (21%).