

More Than 5,200 Theatre Practitioners Generating 128 Million Box Office

According to the “Hong Kong Annual Arts Survey Report Highlights 2011/12”, over 6,400 arts and cultural activities¹ of various art forms were held during the survey period. The Report recorded and analysed quantified data like the genres of the activities, number of performances, presenting organisations, audience attendance and box office income. On the other hand, the “Hong Kong Drama Yearbook” (hereafter referred to as “the Yearbook”) commissioned by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council recorded the dates of the activities, name lists of the production crew etc. These two information are important sources that offer a deeper understanding of the theatre sector as a whole, providing data on the positions created, number of practitioners involved and box office receipts.

A crew of ten for one production

A total of 3,782 participants from 395 local productions were recorded in the Yearbook from April 2011 to March 2012. In other words, it took an average of nearly 10 persons working at different positions for a production.

A list of production crew is recorded for each show in the Yearbook. “SUCKS”, which was staged between 16 and 17 December 2011 at Cattle Depot Theatre, was an example. Details including playwrights (co-written by Lee Chun-chow, Kung Chi-shing, Ivanhoe Lam, Leung Ho-bong and Chester Wong), director (Lee Chun-chow), producer (Li Ching-ching), production manager (Chan Yin-chung), stage manager (Chan Yin-chung), deputy stage manager (Chan Yin-chung), set design (Cindy Ho), lighting design (Lau Ming-hang), sound design (Fung King-hong), composer (Wong Po-shing), costume design (Cindy Ho), make up designer (Cindy Ho) and actors (Ivanhoe Lam, Leung Ho-bong, Wong Po-shing) were recorded.

These posts can be grouped into five different categories: creative position (e.g. director, playwright/adaptor, artistic director, composer/music director etc.), acting position (e.g. actor, live singer etc.), stage crew position (e.g. backstage crew, production coordinator, technical director/technicians etc.), design position (e.g. set,

¹ Arts and cultural activities covered here included only the performing arts events held at the total of 46 venues in the 23 performing arts facilities; the public exhibitions held at the 179 locations and the film festivals/independent thematic screenings at 47 such venues.

lighting, sound effect, costume, multimedia etc.) and administration (e.g. executive producer/presenter, promotion/marketing etc.).

It was found that the 3,782 participants from 395 local productions engaged 7,859 times in the five categories.

Take “SUCKS” as an example. Lee Chun-chow is counted as twice out of 1,648 times of involvement in creative position in Table 1 as he was playwright and director of the production, but his name would be only counted as once among 790 participants. While Ivanhoe Lam, Leung Ho-bong and Chester Wong engaged as playwrights (creative position) and actors (acting position), each of their names are counted as once in creative position and acting position respectively. Hence, Table 1 shows that more than 4,500 names appeared after dividing 3,782 participants into the five categories.

Table 1: Number of times and number of names counted in the 395 local drama productions

Categories	Number of times involved in the 395 local productions	Number of names counted#
Creative position	1,648	790
Acting position	2,973	2,038
Stage crew position	938	521
Design position	1,825	906
Administration	475	311
Total	7,859	4,566

When dividing 3,782 participants into the five categories, same individuals may appear in different categories.

Table 2 shows the distribution of single and repeated involvement in each category. On the whole nearly 30% of the individuals involved more than once, and a higher proportion of repeated involvement is found in “creative position”. For “SUCKS”, Lee Chun-chow was one of the 301 individuals with repeated involvement in the “creative position” category (as playwright and director).

Table 2: Number and percentage of repeated involvement in the five categories

Categories	Number of names#	Number of names with single	Number of names with repeated	Percentage of repeated
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		involvement	involvement	involvement
Creative position	790	489	301	38.1%
Acting position	2,038	1,573	465	22.8%
Stage crew position	521	380	141	27.1%
Design position	906	612	294	32.5%
Administration	311	240	71	22.8%
Total	4,566	3,294	1,272	27.9%

When dividing 3,782 participants into the five categories, same individuals may appear in different categories.

According to the name list of personnel as a whole, approximately over 2,400 individuals out of 3,782 participants involved only once in certain post in one production, without any repeated involvement. The rest of individuals had engaged 2 to 27 times in the same posts or different posts in productions. For instance, Fung King-hong was sound designer of "SUCKS" and other productions; Ivanhoe Lam, Leung Ho-bong and Chester Wong engaged in different posts as aforementioned playwrights and actors in the same production. From the statistics, nearly 1,400 individuals in the theatre sector took up multiple posts.

A glance of productions presented by non-educational institutions

These 395 productions, engaged by 3,782 participants, were staged at different venues. According to the major performing venues included in "Hong Kong Annual Arts Survey Report 2011/12", clearer picture of arts organisations' demand for creative personnel and production crews in public performances would be captured after excluding productions presented by educational institutions².

Table 3 shows that for the 319 productions presented by non-educational institutions, over 3,600 participants had engaged 6,193 times in the five categories. Considering the name list of personnel as a whole, 2,993 theatre practitioners were actually non-repetitive involved in the productions.

² Productions presented by educational institutions were mainly annual performances staged by different departments of local tertiary institutions or drama societies of secondary schools.

Table 3: Number of times and number of names counted in the 319 local drama productions by non-educational institutions

Categories	Number of times involved in the 319 productions presented by non-educational institutions	Number of names counted#
Creative position	1,314	645
Acting position	2,367	1,680
Stage crew position	761	417
Design position	1,362	628
Administration	389	253
Total	6,193	3,623

When dividing 2,993 participants into the five categories, same individuals may appear in different categories.

Table 4: Number and percentage of repeated involvement of the 3,623 names in the five categories

Categories	Number of names#	Number of names with single involvement	Number of names with repeated involvement	Percentage of repeated involvement
Creative position	645	390	255	39.5%
Acting position	1,680	1,309	371	22.1%
Stage crew position	417	303	114	27.3%
Design position	628	412	216	34.4%
Administration	253	194	59	23.3%
Total	3,623	2,608	1,015	28.0%

When dividing 2,993 participants into the five categories, same individuals may appear in different categories.

The statistics show that among 2,993 theatre practitioners, over 1,900 individuals only engaged once. The rest of practitioners had engaged in the same or different posts for 2 to 26 times.

At present, apart from production budgets, the demand for theatre practitioners is determined more by the nature and the need of the production. Take "Women in Red" from the Yearbook as an example. This solo performance, staged at Black Box Theatre, required only 2 practitioners who had shared duties of 4 different posts.

Another production, “Awakening”, performed at Lyric Theatre, required a total of 56 theatre practitioners to take up 64 posts.

The figures quoted reflected only a portion of the name lists of production crews in local productions in 2011/12. If arts groups had not provided detailed information to the Yearbook, the name lists of production crews would be incomplete. Moreover, the name lists were based on the records in the Yearbook, same person using both his/her real name and the pseudonym alternately in different productions would result in repetition. However, it is believed that there were not many of such instances³.

How many practitioners have worked in the drama sector in a year?

According to the Report, \$140 million of the box office income came from 2,530 public paid performances, in which over 90% were local productions. Therefore, it was calculated that \$128 million of the box office income was generated from 535 local productions⁴. It was estimated that not more than 5,200 arts practitioners working in different posts engaged in about 10,600 times in productions.

The 535 local productions included 53 productions presented by the educational institutions. After excluding the productions of educational institutions, there would be 482 local productions mainly produced by arts groups. Nearly 9,400 times of involvement were calculated (see Table 5), and about 5,500 names of theatre practitioners were listed in the five categories. It is estimated that not more than 4,600 arts practitioners were involved.

³ Please see “Explanatory Notes” for information selection.

⁴ A total of 570 theatre productions were recorded for the Year 2011/12, in which 35 productions were presented by non-local organisations.

Table 5: Number of times and number of names counted in the 482 productions presented by non-educational institutions in the Year 2011/12 based on pro rata basis.

Categories	Number of times involved in the 482 productions presented by non-educational institutions	Number of names counted
Creative position	1,985	975
Acting position	3,576	2,538
Stage crew position	1,150	630
Design position	2,058	949
Administration	588	382
Total	9,357	5,474

If looking at the data in the Yearbook in details, it is found that the personnel for backstage, design and administration listed for each production were only the major persons-in-charge. The related supporting personnel had not been fully documented in programme booklets or publicity leaflets. Take “SUCKS” as one of the examples to illustrate. Only posts taken up by individual theatre practitioners like stage manager, set/lighting/sound/costume designers etc were listed but not the relevant technicians needed for the production. Therefore, there should have been more arts practitioners involved in the production.

This year marks the 31st anniversary of the establishment of Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (HKAPA). Since its establishment in 1984, HKAPA has been providing professional programmes in performing arts and nurtured thousands of undergraduates. The School of Drama and the School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts alone have nurtured 324 graduates and 581 graduates from their degree programmes respectively from the first batch of undergraduates graduation to the academic year 2013/14⁵. The diploma/certificate programmes and master’s programmes run by the two Schools have nurtured about 3,000 professionals as at present (see Table 6).

⁵ The first batch of undergraduates of the School of Drama graduated in the academic year 1995/96 while the first batch of undergraduates of the School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts graduated in the academic year 1994/95. Source: HKAPA

Table 6: The number of graduates from the relevant programmes at HKAPA as at 2013/14

	Drama	Theatre and Entertainment Arts
Diploma/Certificate	670	1,379
Undergraduate	324	581
Master's degree	46	30
Total	1,040	1,990

(Source: HKAPA)

Future Demands

At present, theatre professionals are not necessarily graduates of HKAPA. Over 3,000 practitioners in creative and acting categories, as calculated in table 5, included graduates from other disciplines of undergraduate programmes of various universities. As the theatre scene continues to develop, theatre practitioners who have not taken any formal performing arts programmes will contribute to the demand for related advanced programmes.

Table 6 shows the number of graduates of the School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts is substantial. According to the statistic of HKAPA, these graduates had various job opportunities. Many of them were employed immediately upon graduation in theatre, live performances, theme parks, film industry, television and broadcasting, music recording etc. Others found their ways in the entertainment industry as stage consultants, graphic designers, fashion designers and visual merchandisers etc.

In the Year 2011/12, a total of 105 performances⁶ were held in Hong Kong Coliseum and Queen Elizabeth Stadium. An average of one large-scale event was taken place at these two venues every week. The statistic has yet to include the rough estimation of about 30 more large-scale pop music concerts held at Kowloonbay International Trade & Exhibition Centre (KITEC), Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre (HKCEC) and AsiaWorld-Expo. Over 500 theatre productions, as previously mentioned, formed only part of the 4,036 shows staged at standard performing venues.

Posts like "stage crew" and "design" require professional technique; ones with merely an interest cannot enter the field and engage in public performances. More performing venues are on the horizon, e.g. venues in West Kowloon Cultural District

⁶ Source: Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)

and cross-district community cultural centre in Ngau Tau Kok etc., reflecting the arts scene's keen demand for professionals in backstage and management, programme/stage creation and production, as well as other related areas.

“Explanatory notes”

1. The statistic is from the “Hong Kong Drama Yearbook” compiled by The International Association of Theatre Critics (HK) (IATC), which records data of personnel involved in every local drama production. Data was processed as follows:
 - i. Practitioners having same first names and family names were regarded as one individual;
 - ii. Posts taken up by an organisation/group were not included;
 - iii. In the records of some productions, all names were treated as local practitioners unless they were confirmed as non-locals e.g. William Shakespeare or Oscar Wilde, or they clearly listed as non-locals.

2. With the assistance of IATC (HK), posts were grouped into the following five categories:
 - i. Creative post: playwright, artistic director, director, music director etc.;
 - ii. Acting post: actor and live performer;
 - iii. Stage crew: production coordinator, stage manager, technical crew etc.;
 - iv. Design post: set or stage designer, lighting designer, costume designer and multi-media designer etc.;
 - v. Administration: producer, ticketing and venue personnel, promotion and marketing personnel etc.