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# The Dream of the Theatre is Alive in Portland: The Potential of a New Company to Succeed

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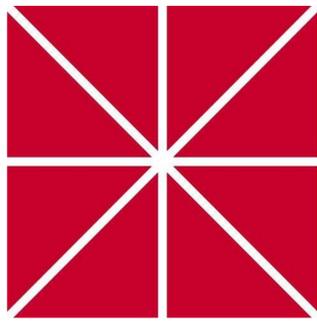
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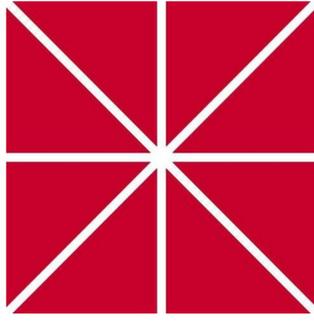
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# “The Dream of the Theatre is Alive in Portland: The Potential of a New Company to Succeed”



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## Overview

According to the 2013 Census Bureau data, a shocking 76.1% of people identified as “white alone.” 43.1% of the population also hold bachelor’s degrees or higher (compared to the 29.2% of Oregon state-wide). Without having done any exploratory research to find the data to back my hypothesis, I hazarded a guess that theatre attendees would largely be white, educated, and upper class. This idea, paired with a quick look at the percentages, made it very clear to me that a theatre company would not be hard-pressed to find an audience in Portland, but that I would still need to do far more research in order to affirm my idea of what the typical make up of a theatre audience was and to assess the market Portland presented and determine if my particular theatre would be able to fit a need that the city had.

## Arts and Theatre In Portland

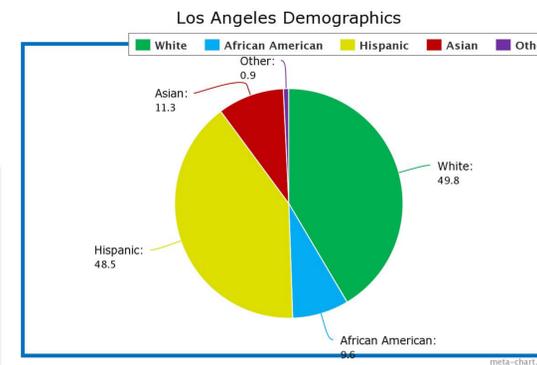
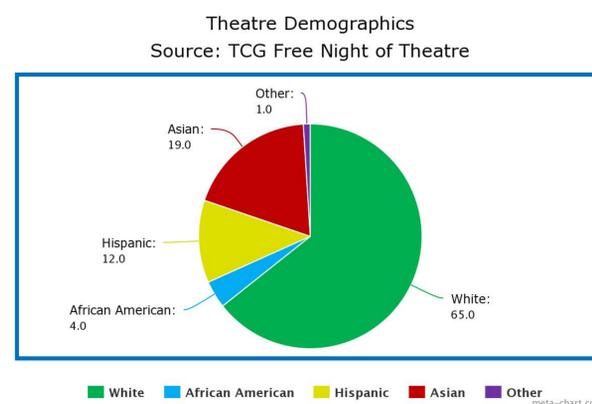
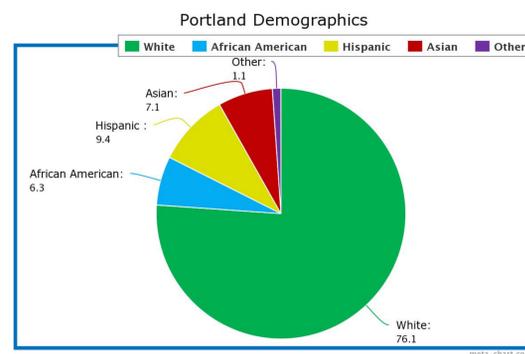
Arts in Portland range from visual to performance art and there are installments and pieces that fall everywhere on the spectrum from government sanctioned to independent or street art. As a very liberal city (according to a poll published by the *Portland Tribune*, 73% of the city identifies as liberal on social issues including arts education), its metropolitan nature and increasingly young, educated citizens, breed a market that is very much conducive to the arts. Portland is home of the Portland’s Center for the Arts, which has been recognized as one of the top 10 performing arts centers in the nation, as well as countless other theatres that are active within the arts scene. Portland Center Stage and the Artist Repertory Theatre are two of the larger theatres within Portland, however, the other smaller theatres in the area are more relatable to the type of theatre I want to open.

Pictured below is Theatre Vertigo’s (one of the smaller companies in Portland) production of *Bob: A Life in 5 Acts*.



## A New Company

*“Our mission is to produce and create works that are challenging and demand an audience response, and to encourage the development of new works that hold the same effect. We do not believe that the theatre is always a place for comfort, and we will seek to engage with this idea in creative and affective ways.”*



*Though so much of creating a theatre company comes down to the culture of the place in which it is founded, a person can gain quite a bit of insight into theatre audiences and whether a theatre will do well in a new place just based on demographics alone, and if there is the opportunity to reach out into new demographics as there is in Portland with reaching non-white and younger audiences.*

## Outreach

For all its wonderful qualities, Portland has profoundly little diversity. Communities of non-white people, primarily African American, have cropped up on the outskirts of the town and are very rarely addressed. While the people of Portland would not at all be against people of other cultures and races moving in, there are no strides being made to make Portland more diverse. My company will seek to address this lack of integration through active outreach to the areas that are predominantly of races other than white. These populations have just as many stories and experiences that need to be addressed and Portland offers a unique environment in which the white majority is willing to listen.

## Moving Forward

I would love to make this idea an actuality. Of course, there is so much to do still in terms of actual logistic planning. There is a huge amount of research that goes into starting a company just in terms of the cost and execution of getting a physical space with actors. The goal of this thesis was to thoroughly explore the preliminary aspects of opening a theatre in Portland, Oregon, and to determine as precisely as is possible if a new theatre company would fit a need that the city had. Through careful marketing research and collection of first hand accounts of people who have opened their own theatre companies and have a working knowledge of Portland and its theatre scene, I have determined that while it may be difficult to penetrate a fairly saturated market, there are still aspects of my theatre company that would be different and therefore could be successful.