

COLLABORATION

For Immediate Release

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ALL-FEMALE CAST AND PRODUCTION TEAM EXPLORE GENDER INEQUITY IN THEATER AND BEYOND IN COLLABORATION'S *GENDER BREAKDOWN*, FEB. 16–MAR. 19, 2017



Collaboraction presents the world premiere of *Gender Breakdown*, created by Dani Bryant (left) and directed by Erica Vannon (right), creators of *Spanx You Very Much*, the break-out hit of last year's *SKETCHBOOK Festival*, and written and devised by an all-female team.

Performances are February 16-March 19, 2017. Click [here](#) for photos.

CHICAGO, February 8, 2017 – According to a recent study, only 25% of the plays produced in Chicago's 2015–16 theater season had female authors. Only 36% were directed by women. A deeper dive into the numbers suggests larger theaters cast fewer ratios of women than smaller non-equity companies, a sobering reality for female actors thinking about job advancement.

Disappointing stats like these and how the recent presidential election put misogyny and gender equity squarely in the media spotlight spurred 10 female identified performers and an all-female identified production and design team to devise *Gender Breakdown*.

A compilation of true, absurd, uncomfortable and gut-punching stories culled from more than 200 Chicago theater artists, Collaboraction Theatre Company's first world premiere of 2017 is a response to the lack of gender equity on and offstage. Vivid tales of violence, miseducation, segregation, and the ongoing disrespect and marginalization of women – even in Chicago's acclaimed theater industry – pull back the curtain on real issues of misogyny, gender politics and racism within the theater industry and beyond. Ultimately, via deeply personal stories from training, auditions, and the rehearsal room, *Gender Breakdown* theatricalizes the question “How is this possible, that in 2017, females are still marginalized in our community?”

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Gender Breakdown is created by Dani Bryant and directed by Erica Vannon – the lead artists behind *Spanx You Very Much*, an exploration of female body empowerment through a 45-woman dance explosion, and the break-out hit from Collaboraction's *15th and Final SKETCHBOOK Festival* in 2016.

Previews are Thursday through Saturday, February 16–18 at 7:30 p.m., Sunday, February 19 at 3 p.m., and Tuesday, February 21 at 7:30 p.m. Preview tickets are only \$5. **Press opening is Wednesday, February 22 at 7 p.m.** Performances run through March 19: Thursday through Saturday at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday at 3 p.m. Sunday matinees from February 18 – March 19 are followed by a post-show discussion. No show Thursday, February 23.

Industry Town Halls are Monday, February 27 and March 13 at 7:30 p.m. On February 27, researcher Kay Kron will lead a post-show panel discussion with Deb Clapp, Executive Director, League of Chicago Theatres; Lori Myers, *Not in Our House*; Laura T. Fischer, *Not in Our House*; and Kimberly Senior, Collaboraction Founder and Director. The March 13 post-show panel features Kay Kron, Willa Taylor of the Goodman Theatre and more guests TBA.

Gender Breakdown is presented in The Vault at Collaboraction Studios in the Flat Iron Arts Building, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave., in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood. Single tickets to performances are \$20–30; \$10–\$15 for students, educators and industry. For tickets and information, visit collaboraction.org or call (312) 226–9633.

More about *Gender Breakdown*

“Female identified artists continue to fight for equal representation, equal pay, three-dimensional characters and rehearsal environments that are free from micro-aggressions and commodification,” said creator Dani Bryant. “*Gender Breakdown* harnesses the same artistic vision and raw electricity of *Spanx You Very Much* to explore how, even in an oftentimes liberal-leaning business, inequities based on gender pervade the theater.”

Dani Bryant (creator) is a devised method playwright and process facilitator who specializes in using social practice as an artistic entry point – letting collaborative discussion shape each project. In addition to creating over 20 pieces of devised theater, she holds great passion for leading facilitated community conversations about gender parity, mental health, arts education and food and body politics. Originally from Gatlinburg, Tennessee, she attended The University of North Carolina School of the Arts and received her BFA from the Hartt School of Theater. She is currently pursuing her Master's and certification in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Drama Therapy. She is the founder of Knife & Fork, co-creator of For Fork's Sake Live and Cabaret Vagabond and is an Artistic Ensemble Member at Adventure Stage Chicago.

Erica Vannon (director) is a director, producer and collaborative artist. She is the founder of Lost Geneva Project, a project based theater company committed to telling women's stories, and a co-founder for Knife & Fork, a food and social practice theater company. For the past three years, Vannon has directed for Shimer College. She served as a co-artistic director for Blank

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Line Collective, a collaborative, movement-based theater company from 2007–2010. She has worked with Collaboraction, Promethean Theatre Ensemble, Chicago Fringe Festival, Rhino Fest, and 20% Theatre. She holds a BA in Theatre Arts with a concentration in Directing from the University of North Texas and a Graduate Laban Certificate of Movement Analysis (GL-CMA) from Columbia College Chicago.



Gender Breakdown stars (top, from left) Brianna Buckley, Jazmin Corona, Kamille Dawkins, Rula Gardenier, Kate Hawbaker-Krohn, (bottom, from left) Priya Mohanty, Siobhan Marguerite Reddy-Best, Carolyn Sinon, Aimy Tien and Mia Vivens.

The all-female design and production team includes Sarah JHP Watkins (set designer), Carley Walker (lighting designer), Katherine Pavlovna Goldberg (costume designer), Karli Blalock (sound designer), Sarah Moeller (producer), Kelly Butler (production manager), Caitlin Body (stage manager), Brittany T. Jasper (assistant stage manager) and Becca Venable (technical director).

Breaking down the numbers

Statistics cited in *Gender Breakdown* and in this press release shed light on hiring parity across theater professions during Chicago's 2015–2016 theater season. The research was undertaken by Kay Kron and Mariah Schultz as a part of Kron's Master Thesis at DePaul University. The study includes the full Jeff eligible season for Equity and Non-Equity theaters nominated for a Jeff Award in any category during Chicago's 2015–16 theater season. (Musicals were not included, because their generally larger cast sizes would have made them overly influential on the overall percentages.) In total, the study encompassed 52 theatres, collects statistics on over 250 plays, resulting in over 4,500 data points.

Gender Breakdown Lounge

The Gender Breakdown Lounge is a performance arts venue for an eclectic range of arts programming to complement Collaboraction's *Gender Breakdown*. After every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday night performance, starting at 9:30 p.m. there will be additional performances in Collaboraction's Salon space featuring female-identified artists, including theater, story telling, music, comedy, dance, opera and more.

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Following is the Gender Breakdown Lounge line-up (at press time, check collaboraction.org for updates):

Friday, February 24

Music with MICHA
Poetry with Kay Kron

Saturday, February 25

Womanscape pre-show reception at 7pm
featuring poetry by Arica Hilton

Saints & Sinners

Curated by Sandra Delgado, featuring
Sandra Delgado, Minita Gandhi, Sadieh Rifai,
DeAnna Brooks, Ilana Faust, Nancy Garcia,
Rose McInerney and Theo Allyn

Thursday, March 3

The Things We Were Learned
Featuring Michelle Leatherby, Paige Maney
and Olivia Perry

Friday, March 4

Beautifully Broken by Ashley J. Hicks
Spoken word with Khloe Janel

Saturday, March 5

Any of my Enemies by Molly Brennan

Thursday, March 9

Token by Kaye Winks
Phone Calls with John Kasich by Eileen Tull

Friday, March 10

Hair Crownicles by Medina Perine
Stand-up with Edith Lule

Saturday, March 11

Music with Layla Frankel

Thursday, March 16

Music with Soft Ledges
Dance with Ms. Miscellanea

Friday, March 17

Baby Crow Productions presents *13 & Not Pregnant*
by Joy Donze, directed by
Mia Capotorto Sommese

Saturday, March 18

Baby Crow Productions presents *13 & Not Pregnant*
by Joy Donze, directed by
Mia Capotorto Sommese

About Collaboraction

With *Gender Breakdown*, Collaboraction (collaboraction.org), Chicago's social contemporary theater, continues its tradition of provocative and powerful world premieres taking on Chicago's most pressing social issues.

Collaboraction collaborates with artists, community activists, and citizens from throughout the city to create original theatrical experiences that push artistic boundaries and explore critical social issues with a diverse community of Chicagoans. Collaboraction has worked with more than 3,000 artists to bring more than 60 productions and events to more than 100,000 audience members.

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Collaboraction is the resident theater company in the Flat Iron Arts Building, 1579 N. Milwaukee Ave., at the epicenter of Chicago’s Wicker Park and Bucktown neighborhoods. The company’s collective three-space venue, Collaboraction Studios, includes The Pentagon, The Vault and The Salon, encompasses 8,000 square feet on the third floor of the historic building, is home to Collaboraction’s own productions, as well as a wide variety of visiting Chicago theater and dance companies and comedy groups. Collaboraction Studios are also home base for Collaboraction For-Hire, which creates custom special event design for private, corporate and civic clients, including the Art Institute, the City of Chicago and more.

Production highlights include Collaboraction’s *PEACEBOOK Festival* in association with the Chicago Park District this past summer, 15 years of the *SKETCHBOOK Festival*, the company’s acclaimed series of *Crime Scene* productions responding to Chicago’s crime epidemic, Sarah Moeller’s *Forgotten Future: The Education Project*, the Chicago premiere of *1001* by Jason Grote, the world premiere of *Jon* by George Saunders and directed by Seth Bockley, and *The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow: an instant message with excitable music* by Rolin Jones.

Collaboraction is led by Artistic Director Anthony Moseley and a dedicated staff and board of directors. Collaboraction is supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Richard H. Driehaus Foundation via the MacArthur Foundation, and the Wicker Park & Bucktown SSA #33 Chamber of Commerce. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

For tickets and information, visit collaboraction.org or call (312) 226-9633.

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