THE ROLE COMMISSIONS FILL IN A PLAYWRIGHT'S FINANCIAL HEALTH
An *Outrageous Fortune* Follow-up
Through The LORT Lens

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INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, the National Endowment for the Arts presented an analysis of the impact made by the arts on the American economy. It found that in 2013 Broadway contributed $117 billion to the gross domestic product. Non-profit theatre (presenters and theatre companies) contributed over $18 billion to the GDP. However, there seems to be a disparity between consumer spending on the arts and the income of those creating the art.

In theatre, the script is the heart – the beginning of the journey and the basis of the craft. If the playwright is the instigating life source for a $135 billion market, then why is it so difficult to make a living as one? Financial stability in the arts has become a frequent topic for playwrights and their advocates in recent years. In response to that conversation, this thesis evaluates the not-for-profit producers’ role in playwrights’ financial health and suggests that professional regional theatres that develop and produce new work should institute flexible support systems that holistically respond to a playwright’s needs beyond funding.

Over the last decade many studies have been conducted and articles written about the financial state of playwrights and organizations engaged in new play development. The result of one of those studies was published by Theatre

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Development Fund (TDF)\(^2\) in 2009 as *Outrageous Fortune, the Life and Times of the New American Play*. Having worked in the realm of new play development for the past twenty years, I was intrigued by the results. But *Outrageous Fortune* also raised many questions as it both confirmed and challenged several assumptions I had made about the financial reality of this business. It sparked my need to see if we were still in the condition painted by the study or if its findings had had an impact on the field. As a producer/director/dramaturg in the not-for-profit sector, I wanted to prove this quote wrong:

> Financially speaking, there is no way to view playwriting as anything but a profession without an economic base. It’s not a romantic notion that playwrights must be prepared to be poor. It’s a sad fact.\(^3\)

For some time, artists have moved from job to job and tried to find ways to prepare for an uncertain future. They have lived outside the traditional definition of “career” – forty years on the job and then retirement with a pension. Why has that been the accepted norm? For one thing, America’s definition of career has morphed over the last few decades. Today’s corporate work force more closely resembles what artists have been doing for some time, cobbling together short term projects and simultaneous multiple gigs. Secondly, for playwrights in particular, the choice often comes down to retaining ownership of their intellectual property and counting on the fact that it will generate income for them in the future, rather than receiving a

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\(^2\) According to the TDF website: “TDF’s twofold mission is to identify and provide support, including financial assistance, to theatrical works of artistic merit and to encourage and enable diverse audiences to attend live theatre and dance in all their venues.”

large payment up front in exchange for the rights like screenwriters often do. There may be several reasons for this but that does not make it any easier to stay committed to the art form.

Is it a truth or a myth that playwrights will never make a sustainable living at their craft? Whose responsibility is it to change that “reality”? Is a consistent income what playwrights really want or need? These were the questions that Outrageous Fortune sparked for me.

In considering these questions, I decided to focus on one part of the findings from the TDF research. As its research showed, commissions appeared to be one of the largest sources of income generated by playwriting. I wanted to see how the field had changed since the publication of TDF’s research. How has the industry responded to the findings? Outrageous Fortune author Todd London believes that League of Resident Theatre (LORT) leaders paid attention to the research and focused their attention on compensation. If decisions makers did so, what role do commissions now play in the ecosystem?

I was also curious to see who was getting the commissions and how many of those plays were being produced. Were theatres seeing commissions as a subsidy for artists or as a commitment to production? If we are commissioning more today, have we caused a bottleneck in the development process? I was concerned that if

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5 LORT is a professional theatre association with 72 member theatres in 29 states and DC that collectively bargains for its members with other theatrical unions and advocate for its members.
the trend is now to commission more plays, we may be perpetuating a cycle of
development without full production, leaving us with a slew of orphaned plays.

And finally, I wanted to tackle my biggest personal assumption about the
commissioning system. Are the same few playwrights dominating the field? I had
believed that this handful was either an elite group of the same writers or a yearly
cycle of a “hot” few. If so, are newer voices being supported by commission money?
I set out to, hopefully, prove myself wrong.

While the Outrageous Fortune research studied a much larger pool, I wanted
to concentrate on the regional field - specifically those theatres with a substantial
enough budget to have a trackable impact. For the purpose of focusing and
gathering research, I defined my professional regional theatre pool LORT members
in category C and above.7 In that pool, there are currently forty-six organizations
that fit that classification with weekly box office receipts averaging $55,750 and
above.8 These theatres have annual operating budgets ranging from $3 million to
$50 million.

Surveys were sent to the artistic leaders at all forty-six theatres.9 Of those,
sixteen responded for a 35% response rate. Those responding represent an equal
spread of the different member budget categories. Information relating to another

7 LORT defines member categories based on the current LORT-Equity Agreement
which averages the theatre company’s weekly box office gross receipts over four
fiscal years.
8 Actors’ Equity Association. “Agreement and Rules Governing Employment in
Resident Theatres – Effective Date February 18, 2013, Expiration Date February 12,
9 See Appendix A
eight theatres’ commissions was found readily available on the organizations’ websites – including a list of playwrights under commission at the theatre.

Surveys were also sent to playwrights directly and via their agents.\(^\text{10}\) While many responded to the survey, several preferred to respond via one-on-one conversations. Interviews were also conducted with four major literary agents, one agency business affairs executive, leadership at the Dramatists Guild and other non-producing playwright advocacy groups. Anonymity was accorded to all that were surveyed and interviewed. Theatre names are only referenced if quotes or information were found in prior published materials.

Commissioning patterns were evaluated through spreadsheet analysis combining the responses of organizations and individual playwrights. This data included who was being commissioned and by what theatre; how many commissions each playwright was currently carrying; the financial amount of each commission; the contractual time frame for submission of a first draft; and rates of commissions produced. By combining results from LORT theatre surveys, playwright surveys and available online data, I was able to generate a pool of 196 playwrights currently under commission in our LORT theatre pool. Those 196 playwrights were under contract for a total of 244 commissions. This data, along with anecdotes from interviews, will lead to a considered evaluation of the role of commissions in the current environment in the following chapters.

\(^{10}\) See Appendix B
Chapter One will evaluate the data compiled in *Outrageous Fortune*. I will explore the ramifications of the statistics and personal anecdotes and set them in context of the research undertaken for this specific paper.

In Chapter Two I will make an in-depth analysis of the LORT theatre survey data collected from June 2016 to April 2017 for this thesis. Comparisons will be made between the members of different categories within LORT in relation to the number of writers under commission as well as the financial amounts paid for said commissions. I will also analyze motivating factors and financial ramifications for the responding organizations.

Chapter Three will look at the playwrights’ perspective by compiling and analyzing the responses from returned surveys as well as first person interviews. I will compare their commission statistics to those provided by the LORT theatre responders. This chapter will also compile and evaluate the playwrights’ individual responses in regards to other sources of support they are being provided or wish were available.

For another perspective, Chapter Four will explore the responses from interviews held with ancillary members of the field such as agents, lawyers, and leaders of advocacy groups.

This will be followed in Chapter Five by a brief analysis of organizations outside of our defined research pool that are exploring and/or innovating alternative models of playwright support and new play development. And in conclusion, this author proposes a flexible hybrid support system for the playwrights in our industry.
CHAPTER ONE

A DECADE AGO – Outrageous Fortune

The purpose of Outrageous Fortune was to “determine how TDF and others could be most helpful in facilitating and encouraging the work of promising playwrights and the performance of their works.”\(^{11}\) The study and resulting analysis took a broad look at the financial reality for playwrights and for new play producing theatres. It covered issues such as how and where playwrights were earning their annual income; how theatres were choosing the work that they developed and produced; and how the relationships between artist, producer and audience played a role in artistic programming.

The research represented in Outrageous Fortune was gathered in 2003 and 2005. The first surveyed sample was from randomly selected members of Theatre Communications Group (TCG).\(^{12}\) The 2005 survey went exclusively to new play producing theatres, ninety-four of which responded.\(^{13}\) Nineteen (or approximately 20%) of those respondents are represented in the LORT theatre pool defined for this thesis, but it is important to note that only 35% of the Outrageous Fortune respondents fit within the budget parameters of this thesis research pool.\(^{14}\)


\(^{12}\) Theatre Communications Group is a national organization founded in 1961 to nurture and promote the professional not-for-profit American theatre. It currently has nearly 700 member theatres. www.tcg.org/AboutUs.aspx.

\(^{13}\) It should be noted that the study does not state the total number of surveys sent to theatres so there is no clear percentage response rate.

For the purpose of this thesis, I will take a focused look at the findings related to playwright income and commission trends. When asked, “Do you budget for any of the following means of new play development,” 67% of the original respondents answered yes to commissions.\footnote{Ibid., Page 11.}

What was not tracked, per the research analysis, was how much money each of those theatres budget or spend on commissions in total. However, a graph in \textit{Outrageous Fortune} shows that, generally, commissions ranged from about $1,000 to $12,000 with the largest percentage (16%) being in the $3000 to $5000 range.\footnote{London, Todd & Ben Pesner. \textit{Outrageous Fortune: The Life and Times of the New American Play}. Theatre Development Fund, 2009. Page 59.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Do you budget for any of the following means of new play development?}
\end{figure}

\textit{Above graph is based on the graph in the Outrageous Fortune Theatre Survey Analysis on page 11.}
As to how many of the commissioned plays respondent theatres produced, the research analysis charted a total of four being produced within the three years prior to the survey.\textsuperscript{17} Not having access to the total number of plays commissioned in those years, it is difficult to determine a page to stage success rate. For the ninety-four responding theatres, the average number of productions per season was seven.\textsuperscript{18} This information will become significant when compared to the rates revealed in the LORT theatre pool responses for this thesis in Chapter Two, where we will analyze how commission fees and production rates have changed since the \textit{Outrageous Fortune} research was conducted.

The overall pool of professional playwrights surveyed for \textit{Outrageous Fortune} was larger - 340 with 250 usable returns.\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Outrageous Fortune} defined “professional” playwrights as those with a production performed by Actors’ Equity Association members in front of a paying audience.\textsuperscript{20} Playwrights responded that they had been working professionally for one to thirty plus years with an average span of eight to thirteen years.\textsuperscript{21}

Playwrights were asked what their average total annual income over five years was; what percentage of that income came directly from playwriting; and what percentage came from other sources. Results showed that the average surveyed playwright’s annual income was between $25,000 and $39,000 annually.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. Page 1.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. Page 1.
Nearly a third of those surveyed made less than $25,000. Over 50% of the total income came from sources unrelated to playwriting. The next largest source at 21.8% came from teaching. Only 15% came from productions of their plays.

Figure 2: Playwrights' Earning By Source

- Sources unrelated to your work as a playwright - 50.9%
- Teaching - 21.8%
- Theatre-related judging and panels - 2.1%
- Theatre-related academic/critical writing or editing - 2.6%
- Writing for film - 5.6%
- Writing for television - 9.1%
- Theatrical productions of your plays - 15%

Above graph is based on the pie chart provided in Outrageous Fortune on page 53.

Writing for television, film and other mediums were mentioned as sources of related income since they involved writing, but because it was not theatre related, this information was separated in the analysis. However, as I will explain later in this paper, classifying earnings from film and television as separate from playwriting income has become more difficult since the publication of Outrageous Fortune. The emergence and success of streaming viewing sources has altered

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standard industry writing schedules as well as the geographical domination that Los Angeles once had.

Playwrights were then asked what percentage of their income directly related to playwriting came from seven different sources: Licensing fees, Publication royalties and advances, Grants, Contests and Awards, Commissions, Production Royalties, and Other. Production royalties only accounted for 20%.  

![Figure 3: Approximately what percentage of your playwrighting income comes from...](image)

*Above graph is based on the pie chart provided in Outrageous Fortune on page 55.*

According to one conclusion in *Outrageous Fortune*, when considering the lower end of the average annual income of $25,000 and that 15% of that comes from playwriting sources, the analysis claimed the average playwright only makes 3% of

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their annual income from actual production. This analysis is tricky as only seventy playwrights of the total surveyed provided answers to the defined breakdown. It therefore cannot be considered truly representative of the field.

Significant to the research for this thesis is that 22% of playwriting related income came from commissions. It was the largest percentage, only matched by “Other”. Of the playwrights surveyed, about 22% had never received a commission. Of those that had been commissioned, payments for those commissions averaged between $3,000 and $4,999 with a third being less than $3,000. On the higher payment end, 4% of the commissions topped out around $12,000.

What appeared to be a more vital issue to playwrights was whether their commissioned plays were actually being produced. Statistics in Outrageous Fortune are unclear as to how many commissioned plays were produced by the theatre that commissioned them. What was spelled out in the book was that 43% of surveyed playwrights had either never been commissioned or never had a production begin as a commission at the theatre that produced it. Outrageous Fortune further stated that 24% of playwright respondents “have had only a single play commissioned and subsequently produced by the commissioning theatre.”

As will be seen in the next chapter, these are the statistics I set out to clarify, update, and analyze.

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26 Ibid, 58.
27 Ibid, 59.
CHAPTER TWO

LORT THEATRES & COMMISSIONS

When asked why theatres commission playwrights, three prominent reasons were mentioned time and time again in the LORT Theatre surveys:

- Financially support playwrights
- Diversify artists working at the organization
- Develop relationships for future collaborations – established writers as well as those beginning to achieve a national profile.

The first raises questions about whether it is the job or responsibility of producing theatres to subsidize playwrights just for writing. For many playwrights, a little income to tide them over while writing can be immensely helpful. But we must consider what the full life cycle of earnings is for any given play to a playwright. Where should the producing organization land in that cycle? Maybe it is enough to subsidize a first draft of a new play that then becomes available to other theatres to produce. If the commissioning theatre does produce the play, it then also provides developmental resources and pays advances and royalties.

Diversifying the pool of artists that a theatre produces and works with has long been a priority for many organizations. Providing some financial support to encourage those artists to stay in the field is a noble gesture. However, as we will see in Chapter Three, many playwright respondents worry that this is a token
gesture. They are concerned that theatres demonstrate diversity at the developmental level and not at the full production level.

However, on the LORT theatre side, many see commissioning as a beneficial way of getting to know those writers and develop future relationships. Commissions provide resources to new voices that could later be a part of the institutional family. Those, in time, become playwrights that the theatre produces. This theory applies to all writers with whom the theatre wants to develop a relationship. Those writers could be up-and-coming or established writers that the theatre would like to produce. By entering into a commission agreement with those playwrights, the theatre secures a place in what could be a long queue of competing theatres.

Survey respondents also provided other nuanced reasons for commissioning playwrights. One LORT B theatre from the West Coast is looking to form relationships with playwrights who “have something interesting to say about the moment we find ourselves living in right now.”

Another West Coast theatre makes its decisions to commission if:

A story/subject feels endemic to the...area. More and more we feel that the unique opportunity here is creating work that feels native to or reflective of our city. Philosophically, we do not commission work with ‘commercial’ intentions; rather, as one of the country’s major LORT theatres, are we working with artists at the top of their game; are we telling stories about our surroundings; are we utilizing our

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28 The uncredited quotes in this chapter come directly from LORT Theatre survey responses. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity.
unique standing in the theatre world to create new work that brings
together the local scene with nationally-recognized artists?²⁹

Other reasons to commission include building relationships with writers
whose work fits in with the theatre’s aesthetic. As described by a Mid-West LORT B
theatre:

We commission artists we are excited about whom we believe are
likely to write a play we would produce. The goal of a commission is
to generate a play for us to produce; we do not aim to commission just
to support writers financially. We have been talking a lot lately about
commissioning writers to write on specific topics, either suggested by
the writer or coming from an idea suggested by us. We believe that
we will be more likely to produce the commissioned play if we know
what we are getting when we give the commission, rather than not
know the topic until we read a draft, at which point we may realize
that it is not a topic of interest. Our thinking is that, in most cases, it
will be best to talk with the writer about what the play will be before
agreeing to commission them to write it – in order to avoid them
writing a play we would not want to produce.³⁰

Of the LORT theatres responding to my survey, three do not currently
commission plays. One of those (an East Coast LORT B theatre) closed its
commissioning program a few years ago to refocus those resources on its
playwright fellowship program. The other two organizations do not commission

²⁹ LORT Survey response. 18 November, 2016.
³⁰ LORT Survey response. 21 November, 2016.
due to financial constraints. Several theatres only commission for their smaller stage and usually treat it as a way to form a relationship with the writer and create a pipeline to the mainstage.

South Coast Repertory began its commissioning program in 1980 and is the oldest program I found. The most recent to the commissioning system is American Conservatory Theater which began its current program in 2013. The majority of respondents started commissioning in the 1990’s.

By analyzing results from the LORT Theatre surveys and available online data I was able to identify a group of 196 playwrights currently under commission in the research pool. Those 196 playwrights were under contract for a total of 244 commissions. If taking a straight average, that would mean 1.2 commissions per playwright. However, the data spread shows that of the 196 playwrights, thirty-three were committed to more than one commission. Ten of those carried three or more. And one is currently commissioned by seven theatres (though two of the commissions reported by that playwright are not with any of our pool theatres).³¹

Based on these findings, my assumption that the same elite writers hold the majority of commissions does not turn out to be true. A number of the names compiled in my research spreadsheet are well known in the industry but I was surprised by who did not appear on the list. The writer carrying seven commissions is on my presumed “hot” list and claims that every play that he has been commissioned to write was produced by the commissioning theatre. The next

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³¹ All statistics quoted in this chapter come from the collection of responses from the theatres surveyed and compiled in spreadsheet form.
The highest commissioned playwright is a woman who claims she writes quickly and meets all of her scheduled obligations.

It appears that at least a third of the writers already have established relationships with the commissioning organization through either repeat commissions or prior multiple productions. Approximately sixty-five are first time commissions. Also important to note is that at least half of the 244 commissions were at theatres outside of the individual playwright’s hometown. We will consider the ramifications of this statistic in Chapter Three as travel costs and other logistics become factors in accepting commissions, especially if the writers live outside large theatre cities such as New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles.

Of the twenty-four theatres for which commissioning information was available (from the LORT theatre and Playwright surveys as well as online research), three theatres only have one playwright currently on commission. Ten have over ten playwrights currently on commission. And one has fifty-seven. It should be noted that this particular theatre has a long history of commissioning and in the past ten years alone has produced forty-four of its commissioned plays on one of its three stages.

The amount that each theatre pays for commissions ranges from $2,000 to $40,000 per script. The $2,000 comes from a LORT C theatre with an annual budget of $7 million but it should be noted that it has paid up to $10,000 for musicals and it currently has twelve playwrights under commission. The next smallest amount is $5,000 coming from a LORT C theatre with a $3.2 million annual operating budget that does not currently have any playwrights under commission. One LORT A
theatre has two programs – one for its mainstage for which it pays $10,000 and another that begins at $7,500 for its theatre for young audiences’ program (for which it has had twenty-one commissions over the last ten years.) Over 45% of respondent commissions start at $10,000 and 27% begin at higher than that. The highest commission rate reported was $40,000. Only a handful of theatres noted that they include travel and housing for developmental periods with their commissions.

![Figure 4: LORT Commissions - Highs and Lows](image)

**LORT Theatre Annual Budget vs. Commission Rates**

This is a vast difference from the statistics in *Outrageous Fortune*. Again, in its research pool, commissions ranged from $1,000 to $12,000. Almost 54% of the commissions were for less than $7,000. What has caused this increase? Did
*Outrageous Fortune* have this effect? Several artistic leaders stated that they had increased their fundraising efforts or had secured long-term concerted funding for the program. More than one noted that they have had to increase the amount paid for commissions to stay competitive in the field and anchor the writers they want in their seasons.

One particular LORT A theatre that was founded with a focus on new plays and writers is relatively late in starting its commissioning program. The reason is that, for many years, it was the only theatre in its region doing new work. It always had strong relationships with writers and could deal on a handshake. But now, there are more theatres active in new play development and those relationships must be secured financially to, again, stay competitive.

Another factor in higher commissioning rates is the increasing trend of theatres to co-commission writers with the hope of giving the play multiple lives. These theatres pool their resources to grant commissions and then co-produce the finished project at multiple venues. As a result of this strategy, the commissions are often larger than a single organization might have been able to grant. The playwright also benefits by being able to continue to develop the material over time and in response to different audiences.

With the rise of the National New Play Network’s efforts to create rolling premieres across the region, plays are being helped to gain a longer life-span.32

Playwright Lauren Gunderson agrees and tries to make every premiere of her work

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32 National New Play Network (NNPN) is a coalition of not-for-profit theatres that champions the development, production and continued life of new plays by supporting co-productions between members as well as simultaneous or consecutive openings around the country of multiple productions. Nnpn.org
a rolling one if possible. To her, it is the best idea in American theatre right now.\textsuperscript{33} Rolling premieres help combat plays disappearing after critical snubs on their first outing and allow a playwright to experience a variety of audiences responding to his or her work and therefore these plays grow with each production. However, some playwrights are concerned about the uneven spectrum of resources at NNPN theatres. They are also concerned that their play may be produced at theatres where they have no prior relationship or context for the work. Only five of NNPN’s member theatres are in my LORT pool.\textsuperscript{34}

Both LORT member theatres and playwrights were asked about the timeframe for fulfilling commissions. With the rise in commission payment rates, I wondered if we had created an artistic debt to replace a financial one. Were playwrights overburdening themselves with commissions without enough time to fulfill them? Were they doing so for the money? My research showed that, for the most part, playwrights are mindful of the time required of each commitment as well as the financial value of that time.

Over half of the LORT theatres stated that they specifically asked for a first draft within a year in the commission contract. Several stated that they did not set deadlines in the contract so as not to constrain the writer’s creativity or because history had proven that those deadlines rarely worked out as planned. One particular LORT theatre respondent is still waiting on a commission nine years after the initial contract.


One playwright who currently has three commissions stated that she is a
deadline writer and so loves being held to a schedule. Another playwright (with
seven commissions) says that while she has never had a contractual deadline and it
has taken as long as eight years to submit a first draft, she makes her best effort to
finish in a year. For all the playwrights surveyed, timelines were mutually beneficial
because contractual language also spelled out how long the commissioning theatre
had to commit to produce or release the play back to the playwright for possible
productions elsewhere.

The prevalent reasons for theatres with contractual deadlines are logistical
and financial. A pre-determined schedule allows a theatre to plan resources for
reading and/or development of the play if it has some sense of when it will land in
the pipeline. Unlike commercial theatre, the LORT theatres plan seasons out at least
a year in advance and knowing where you have room to slot a new play can ease the
path. This makes it harder to respond to current events in the moment. While older
plays may still speak to current times in a relevant manner, a preplanned season
makes it harder to respond immediately with contemporary voices and styles.

A schedule also allows theatres to plan for financial phases. This can be both
money out to the playwright as well as funding coming in to the theatre to support
commissions. Many funders have established trigger points at which funds are
released to theatres. If a foundation, for instance, has awarded a multi-year grant to
a theatre, funds may not be released to that theatre until certain requirements have

35 Playwright Survey. 3 December, 2016.
been met – i.e. a first commission has been completed before they will fund the second.

Of important interest to me was how many of the plays commissioned by these theatres were actually produced. Over the last ten years fifty-one commissioned plays were produced on the mainstages and fifty-four were produced on second or alternative stages according to the LORT theatre survey respondents. Eight of the theatres had announced season slots for a total of twelve productions on mainstages in the upcoming year. Compared to the statistics in Outrageous Fortune, my research shows a higher commission-to-production rate than was seen ten years ago in TDF’s much larger research pool.

Though I did not ask this question directly in the survey, I was curious about what financial obligation the theatres ask from playwrights in return for the commission? Since Outrageous Fortune, many theatres have dropped requests for future subsidiary rights in exchange for a commission or a first production.36 The Public Theatre (not a member of our research pool), and the Roundabout Theatre announced soon after the publication of Outrageous Fortune that they would be altering their subsidiary rights policies. The Public switched from receiving 10% for ten years after production to not receiving a dime until the playwright earns over $75,000 in royalties. “The Playwright needs the money more than the Public does,” said Artistic Director, Oskar Eustis.37

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36 Subsidiary rights are a producer’s share of income a playwright derives from future licensing as well as adaptations into other forms – i.e. film, television.
Roundabout, which had previously clashed with playwrights over its policy, announced a similar tiered change. It had previously taken as much as 40% of future royalties. Now, it negotiates a percentage on works that are major hits or run for more than eighteen weeks at its Off-Broadway space. It does not negotiate any royalty participation for plays done in its black box theatre.38

Lincoln Center Theater has never taken a share of subsidiary rights because it “wanted to support playwrights struggling to pay rent, buy health insurance and otherwise support themselves.”39 Center Theatre Group made similar policy changes after a 2007 speech by Richard Nelson.40 This is an issue that the Dramatists Guild and its Legal Defense Fund have long watched and which we will discuss later in Chapter Four.

39 Ibid.
CHAPTER THREE

THE PLAYWRIGHT’S PERSPECTIVE

As stated in *Outrageous Fortune*, playwrights and producers have different interpretations of their environment. While surveyed LORT theatre leaders articulated a commitment to playwrights and new play development, playwrights were not always sure they meant it. There was a sense that many organizations place a higher priority on overhead costs and staff than on paying the artists that work in their spaces.

In observing the financial survey responses from theatres, this belief is not fully supported. By perusing one particular LORT A theatre’s Form 990 for 2015, it can be seen that general staff salaries equaled $3,574,428 while artist salaries equaled $13,244,091. This number, or course, does not separate playwrights from other creative artists, but it could disprove the overall theory. Even so, one playwright advocate I spoke with stated that there is a schism due to an awareness of the disparity between the artistic director’s salary and an artist’s income.

The most important element to counter this perceived schism is trust. When playwrights develop a strong history with LORT theatres, it is usually due to a personal relationship with the artistic director developed over multiple productions. When treated well while at an organization and supported by its leadership, playwrights wish to continue building those relationships. That appears

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41 LORT A theatre’s 2015 990 found on foundationcenter.org. These numbers include payroll taxes and benefit expenses.
to be a deciding factor for why many playwrights take commissions from particular theatres.42

Playwrights expressed a sense that theatres commission work they have no intention of producing so they can market and fundraise around key catchphrases such as “diversity” and “emerging artists”. As indicated in Outrageous Fortune, playwrights sometimes feel that certain voices and types of work are relegated to smaller or second stages when actually produced.

While these concerns were expressed by every playwright I spoke with, it feels more like a long-held gross generalization than the reality. While some theatres are guilty of token diversity gestures, and parity across the field has not been reached, it does appear that things are changing. When analyzing the responses from our LORT theatre pool it shows that over one hundred and five commissioned plays have been produced over the last ten years with at least twelve scheduled for the current and upcoming seasons. Keeping in mind the limited number of slots in a season, those numbers are higher than I anticipated.43 It must be noted as a counterpoint that the theatres with the highest success rate of commission to production have multiple stages. Information not made clear by the LORT theatre respondents is specific numbers on how many plays that were commissioned over the last ten years were never completed by the playwright.

42 This reasoning was mentioned multiple times by surveyed playwrights.
43 A percentage comparison of produced vs unproduced plays would provide a clearer analysis of commission success, however the research done for this thesis did not provide a deep enough breakdown to provide accurate single year rates.
For the playwrights that provided financial information in their survey responses, commissions made up a range of 15% to 60% of their writing income.\textsuperscript{44} Interestingly, the playwright who made the lower end in commissions posted the highest percentage of production royalties/advances income at 40% as well as 35% in licensing income. Conversely, the playwright with the highest percentage in commissions posted no licensing income and the lowest in production royalties/advances (10%) over the last five years. While this would seem to indicate that commissions are only going to playwrights early in their careers, these are extreme examples in our field of surveyed playwrights.

While statistics show that commissions still make up a significant portion of annual income from writing, the goal of playwrights is overwhelmingly to have their plays produced somewhere. Earning royalties from those productions came in second. This is why it is important to playwrights that they get scripts back into their own hands to shop around if the commissioning theatre is going to pass on them. This stated response from playwrights ran counter to my prior concern that playwrights were stacking multiple commissions as a main source of income.

What surveyed playwrights seemed to be more concerned about were other elements, such as insurance, office space and travel expenses, that help foster a more ideal environment in which to create. Our playwright respondents were clear in expressing a laundry list of needs. The survey responses, in the playwrights’ own words, included the following:

\textsuperscript{44} All financial statistics related to playwright income noted in this chapter are derived from answers given by survey respondent playwrights.
• Residencies – salary, benefits, office, input in the direction of the institution.

• Funding for research/travel.

• Salary. Even just enough to pay my rent for a year would take off so much stress.

• Insurance would be huge. Housing would be great.

• I prefer my personal health insurance to a group plan, but I would not mind money to help pay for it.

• When thinking about the work: as many workshops, retreats, opportunities to hear the work by actors is, for me, what makes me take giant strides towards completion.

• A salary during rehearsals/workshops. We give so much time for free because in theory we will make it up in royalties, but that money is months away and time spent in rehearsal is time I can’t be writing on and turning in another script.

• We would love to get the same consideration when we travel that other artists do. I’m on the road six months of every year.

• Actors often get gym memberships, the playwright doesn’t. Actors get luggage paid for, playwrights don’t always. Same with door to door transportation, etc.

• Multiple commissions and productions from one theatre. A multiyear commitment type plan.
• The Mellon Fellowships are awesome, but for so many of us who don’t work where we live, we can never apply. Which isn’t our fault. I would love to work at home.

• Retirement plan that gets paid into like other artists. I’ve got no retirement savings.\textsuperscript{45}

• Stronger involvement in planning the development process.

Across the board, our playwrights stated that health insurance has become a bigger concern than overall annual income. More and more, the benefits that salaried employees have and playwrights do not is coming up in the national conversation.\textsuperscript{46} Commissions do not currently come with health care. Some residencies do.

A handful of theatres are altering their development programs to address this issue. Beginning in 2014, Playwrights Horizons (not a member of our LORT theatre pool) began paying all the playwrights in each season an estimated half of their insurance premium for the year as well as a fee for being involved in the preproduction process of their play. Playwrights Horizons’ artistic director Tim Sanford stated that a play’s future value is tied up with the relationships and partnerships formed during the development of the work and that the playwrights

\textsuperscript{45} Retirement plan contributions are tricky because playwrights often trade off employee benefits in order to retain independent contractor ownership rights of their material.

should be taken care of during that process. This idea of supporting playwrights’ health insurance will become more paramount in the near future as the new presidential administration and Congress attempt to dismantle the Affordable Care Act.

Ralph Sevush, the Executive Director of the Dramatists Legal Defense Fund, laid out his top concerns for the members of the Dramatists Guild. First was securing full productions (ideally multiple productions) of playwrights’ work so that royalties and licensing fees remain a leading source of income. His second concern was healthcare. His third concern was childcare for playwrights.

As far as childcare, Sevush wonders whether that plays a role in why women are produced less often than men. If a playwright has a new play in La Jolla but lives in New York, do they take their child out of school and with them? He believes if more organizations like the Lily Awards Foundation continue promoting the gender disparity discussion and providing opportunities that balance writing and family, it may go a long way to level the playing field. For several women writers I spoke with, having a family was a choice they were happy to make, but it did affect where they were submitting their plays, where they were being produced, and how involved they were in the developmental process of their new work. For some, they

48 Sevush, Ralph. Personal interview at Dramatists Guild. 9 December, 2016.
49 Ibid.
50 The Lily Awards Foundation is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to promote women and gender parity in the theatre industry. In 2015, it launched Family Residency, a partnership with Ryder Farm to create a retreat for women playwrights and their children so that the writers would not have to choose between their work and raising their children.
felt their momentum stalled because they took time off - not from the actual writing but from seeking productions in order to focus on their kids for a time. In one American Theatre Magazine article, media critic Celia Wren worried that female artists adjust their careers when “biology sets in”. Women pull themselves out of the market rather than juggle family under difficult circumstances. It felt to them like a case of “out of sight, out of mind” and harder work to get back into the stream when their children are grown.

Commissions do not come with office space as do many residencies. Playwright Peter Sinn Nachtrieb believes that committed work space provides an anchor. One of our playwright respondents noted that just having an office to go to that was dedicated to writing was a relief. Many playwrights are living month to month and their homes are small due to the high cost of rent. To have room to breathe and spread out while writing is beneficial to the work.

An office also provides the sense that the playwright has a creative home to balance their solitary work. Even just a desk in a theatre’s offices provides a sense of belonging and involvement in the day to day world that spins around their work as a writer. It also helps counter the feeling of being out of the loop or out of sync with their colleagues. And, as one playwright noted, the creative inspirations and collaborations that spring from running into someone in the hallway are exciting.

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My surveyed and interviewed playwrights were vocal in expressing their needs and challenges. As we will see in the next chapter, there are many formal institutions devoted to helping playwrights meet those challenges.
CHAPTER FOUR
OTHER VOICES IN THE FIELD

In gathering information about playwrights’ livelihoods, it became clear that I needed to speak with industry professionals that help playwrights navigate the field. Meetings were set up with several prominent playwright agents and agency attorneys, leaders of advocacy groups, and directors of developmental organizations that do not produce.

The agents I spoke with were very candid, but they only agreed to contribute to my research on condition of anonymity. One agent I spoke with made it a point to tell me at the beginning of the interview that he is proactively anti-commission, or as he put it, “I am not a commission-friendly agent.” He is especially opposed to playwrights carrying multiple commissions, believing that an agent who promotes it is paralyzing the playwright and the work. It should be noted that he has about thirty playwright clients and several are on the most produced lists of the last and upcoming season. Several of his clients have commissions but he usually advises against them if the writer does not desperately need the money. In his opinion, there are three reasons to accept a commission:

- The playwright has a financial need. Especially for young playwrights.

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53 Agent. Personal interview. 9 December, 2016.
• If a playwright has a specific idea of what they want to write and it
is simpatico with the mission of the commissioning theatre or
community in which the theatre resides.
• If the theatre is run by an Artistic Director the playwright admires
and wants to be affiliated with.

Commissioning money can pay a few months’ rent and provide seed money
to playwrights so they do not need the “world’s worst day job”. And a commission is
a sign of validation for a young playwright. Sometimes, taking a commission is a
good idea due to the benefits of a particular theatre’s developmental structure.
These are theatres that take care of the lifespan of a playwright’s work. One of this
agent’s clients is very politically minded and a theatre in DC is interested in the
writer. He believes this relationship makes sense and warrants a commission.
Some theatre leaders have a history of being consistent, generous, and dedicated to
the best launch of a play. This agent named four of our LORT Theatre pool members
that fit that bill and have earned his support.

His prevailing reason for not supporting commissions is that he does not like
feeling that he is limited as far as his control over the play’s initial production and
the decision as to whether the play is ready for the harsh eye of prominent critics.
Counter to my belief that a new play is more likely to get killed in New York, he was
more concerned about the piece being panned out of town before it gets the
“produced in New York” stamp of approval. He also believes that Artistic Directors
have a vested interest in transferring a show to New York City and it is to his client’s
benefit if he works in tandem with those Artistic Directors to advocate for the play’s future.

Along that line, if the piece is clearly commercial, a commission locks it into a regional premiere and he would prefer to have flexibility in premiering the play in its most financially remunerative way. Conversely, one of his clients has a show that is premiering out of town because it has technical issues that are too expensive to try out in New York City.

His final reason to advocate for a commission is if a theatre (his example was not a member of our LORT Theatre pool) pays such high royalties that any commission from them is worth taking. Simply having a shot at this high return on the playwright’s investment of time is valuable and appealing.

Another agent interviewed for this thesis said he tells his clients not to take a commission if they do not trust the literary manager or dramaturg at the theatre. But if their client does trust the team, that relationship can only benefit the writer. He specifically pointed out LORT Theatre pool members that facilitate research and relationships for the playwright to access while writing. This was especially true for our interviewed playwrights who have a majority of their work presented away from their hometowns. The artistic teams at regional theatres help open new doors, provide engagement with the audience throughout the writing progresses, and provide space for artists to engage with each other.

Two of the agents I spoke with advocate for theatres to move away from commissions, or drop them entirely. They believe that, instead, residencies can be life changing for their clients. With office space, insurance, a salary and direct
engagement with all the departments supporting each production, playwrights can better relax and invest in their work.

Another agent I interviewed firmly believed that commissions are important because they keep playwrights from fleeing theatre for film and television. I would argue that changing trends in the film and television industry allow playwrights to keep active in both worlds. They are no longer fleeing but finding it easier to write across mediums and financially benefit from that combination. Writers want to write and be heard. Fewer and fewer are limiting the vehicles through which they create.

One agent I spoke with challenged my concern that commissions might be creating a glut of unproduced plays. He feels that theatres that have demonstrated a commitment to the actual playwright (rather than the play) prove more successful. The only way a writer’s work gets better is if they keep getting produced. He called for more theatres to be loyal to the writers they work with and commit to producing their next play and the next one after that.55

Another agent agreed with my initial concern that the same handful of playwrights are getting the majority of the commissions and they are not the ones who need the money. On a weekly basis, he fields inquiries about his five most successful writers. His other writers, while being produced around the country, are not being sought out for commissions.

One part of the job that deeply bothers these agents are the calls from theatre development departments asking for lists of all the theatres that produced the plays

55 Agent. Personal interview. 9 December, 2016.
they commissioned, whether their theatre premiered it or not. While this may feel like a waste of time for the agents, it is necessary information for the producing theatres. Without a record of the history of plays an organization has commissioned, it cannot renew or obtain new funding for future commissions – that is the nature of the funding world.

Because of this, the agents I spoke with are keeping an eye on new play development funding models. Some pointed out that new play development funds have been raised on certain markers (i.e. diversity, gender, etc.) and are often “passed through” the institution to the artist – meaning the commission money does not affect the working budget of the theatre. If it is more expensive to mount a full production and the work is “risky” for the institution, these agents ask how likely the organizations are to produce the finished commission rather than simply move on to the next one without ever producing the play.

I stated earlier that many theatres have revised their subsidiary rights policies to better support the playwright. However, one agent I interviewed has been seeing an increase in the amount smaller theatres ask for on commissioned plays and he will not agree to the terms. Those theatres asking for more appear to be newer to commissioning and new play development.56 This agent does, however, work with institutions that are building in successes that trigger participation (i.e., the show runs a certain number of performances or is extended).

56 I was unable to find any evidence for why these theatres are asking for more other than that they may be hoping to copy historic examples of works (such as A Chorus Line) that greatly benefited their originating organizations.
One agent talked about advocating for commissions for her older clients. Some (often white men) had transitioned to television and film writing and were having difficulty transitioning back into theatre. These writers had been successful in theatre at one time, but styles and narrative forms have since changed. A commission gives them support to explore new forms (musicals) or styles (less traditionally narrative).57 This is the same agent who believes that “emerging voices” has become a dangerous catch phrase. She feels theatres that are commissioning young, emerging or diverse voices are doing so in lieu of producing them. She also sees a trend among young writers in expecting to be commissioned. These writers focus on getting the commission and not on the writing.

What is clear is that most agents are interested in deeply understanding the needs of their clients and the work they write. The agents that develop strong relationships with their clients are not only able to advocate for them but also understand when it is a good time to do so. As agents keep track of their clients’ commissions, they can more effectively advocate or negotiate when a client is between projects and has the time to commit.

When asked if orphaned commissions were a concern, one agent said no because a commission is not an indefinite option or a purchase of the work. It belongs to the writer and hopefully can be released and pitched to other theatres. One of our interviewed playwrights agrees. They want a firm deadline by which the theatre must commit or pass on the work so they can then get it out to other possible producers. Agents are seeing individual theatres asking for more time to

57 Agent. Personal Interview. 6 December, 2016.
make their decision about whether to produce or pass on the commission. This becomes a strongly negotiated point because the faster the agent and playwright can get that play to another theatre, the less likely it is to be inhibited by a “passed on” stain.

One interviewee believed that commissions can be of enormous value because they provide cash in hand. While that may be true in some cases, they rarely buy enough for exclusive time to focus on the one project. Until commissions reach a point where they constitute an annual income, they are still just a piece of the pie and not the end game. In the next chapter, we will analyze a few examples of changes that are happening in the industry.
CHAPTER FIVE
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Commissions still appear to be a solid form of support for playwrights. As one artistic leader put it, “The problem isn’t the commissioning system. It is those who make the decisions.”\(^{58}\)

As expressed by many I spoke with, successful new play development relies on an organization being true to its mission. A large number of our LORT theatre pool have a proven history of commitment to playwrights and the production of their work. Many of the playwrights and advocates I spoke with could list the same group of theatres they believed in which are committed to providing funding and ancillary support for playwrights while they are working. These theatres also commit to producing the writers they support – whether through the piece commissioned or a commitment to long term relationships that lead to future productions. Those that are not truly committed have dropped commission efforts when faced with financial hardship.

A prime example of commitment to producing writers comes from Arena Stage’s December 2016 unveiling of its “Power Plays” initiative.

Arena Stage’s organizational vision is to galvanize the transformative power of theater to understand who we are as Americans...we recently launched an ambitious initiative called Power Plays, commissioning twenty-five new plays from twenty-five playwrights,

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\(^{58}\) Anonymous Artistic Leader. Personal Interview. 21 September, 2016.
each on a different decade in America’s history inspired by people, incidents and political events. The initiative focuses on five distinct cycles—Presidential Voices, illuminating exceptional Presidents and remarkable events in their lives and administrations; African-American Voices, heralding African-American stories in our country’s history and politics; Insider Voices, offering an exclusive perspective on the complex workings of American institutions and culture; Musical Theater Voices, featuring musicals celebrating political ideas and events; and Women’s Voices, shining a spotlight on female voices in our country’s political life.59

What is so powerful about this announcement is its roots in Arena Stage’s mission which, in part, states that “Arena Stage is alive as a center for American Theater in our nation’s capital with productions, diverse and innovative works from around the country and the nurturing of new plays.”60 The work will be by and about distinctly American voices. The playwrights announced so far are diverse not only in race, age, and gender but also in style and voice. The commitment to the individual work and the initiative is long term. This is not a “let us try it this year” sort of endeavor.

As I was finalizing this thesis, Center Theatre Group announced its new Edgerton Foundation Playwrights Initiative.61 The $1 million grant from the Edgerton Foundation will help fund CTG’s effort to co-commission over fifty new plays in the coming years. While the four theatres announced as partners are not members of my LORT member theatre pool, all the playwrights announced for the first phase appear on the list of playwrights commissioned by those member theatres. As CTG’s Artistic Director Michael Ritchie said, “Co-commissioning with some of the top theatres in the U.S. and London allows us to put our resources together in support of the creation and production of new work around the world.”62

Slowly, more institutions are working at revising or creating new models to take a more holistic look at playwrights and ultimately new play production. Many of the theatres surveyed are shifting funds towards residencies to complement commissioning programs. These residencies provide daily needs such as office space, dramaturgical feedback, and developmental resources. More importantly, they provide playwrights a sense of commitment and support from the organization as well as the opportunity to be an influential voice at that organization. Several of the playwrights I spoke with said knowing the theatre had a long-term vision for the relationship was encouraging. It also gave the writers time to be writers without the stress of writing to a deadline, and the luxury to explore and fail.

62 Ibid.
LORT theatre pool members are also experimenting with meeting the non-writing needs that often prevent playwrights from actually writing. The Cleveland Play House aptly named a new initiative the “Self and Family Wellness Policy”.\textsuperscript{63} The program was designed to help staff and artists balance work and their personal life. It includes a privacy room for nursing mothers, napping children and personal retreat.

In 2015, La Jolla Playhouse launched the Paula Marie Black Endowment for Women’s Voices in the Art of Theatre, a $1 million fund which provides, among other things, female artists with child care assistance, health insurance and other needs. Artistic Director Christopher Ashley said the goal is “to try to make sure we’re not asking our artists to make a choice between life and work, but really trying to create an environment where their life is as supported as we can possibly make it, so that their work is as empowered as possible.”\textsuperscript{64}

The Howard Gilman Foundation awards general operating grants to organizations to cover travel, child care, substitute teachers for playwrights who teach and must miss class for development or rehearsal, and other expenses that get in the way of artists committing to long term development.\textsuperscript{65} It appears that more theatres and funders are conversing about the non-compensational needs of playwrights and taking action. It is important that theatres continue this conversation with potential funders about the concerns and aspirations expressed

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
by all involved in this research. They play a fundamental role in influencing the
trends in our industry.

These signs of change are encouraging. In the following conclusion, I suggest
a model that could be implemented by LORT theatres to broaden the scope and
impact of the resources they already have available.
CONCLUSION

In the almost ten years since *Outrageous Fortune* was published, the industry has changed. Having responded to and then rebounded from the financial crisis in 2008, many theatres that are committed to playwrights and new play development have increased funding and opportunities for playwrights. Theatres not truly committed to new play development either cut or restructured programs. By comparing the financial statistics initially published with what this thesis research revealed, it appears that *Outrageous Fortune* had an impact on the industry. Producers and artistic leaders took notice, listened to many of the concerns expressed by playwrights, and adapted through substantial growth.

But was this change the right one to make? I believe that theatres doubled down on playwright commissioning as the ultimate answer to industry concerns. Those commissions rose in total number and in individual monetary value. The good news is that it also appears that these theatres’ commission to production rates increased instead of stalled as was my initial concern. Unfortunately, in my opinion, responding in this way forced a sort of tunnel vision solution and limited the ways in which playwrights’ needs were met or they were integrated into organizations.

I propose LORT theatres continue to commission playwrights. However, I suggest that current trends be realigned to make broader use of funds and resources. Theatres should re-imagine a more flexible plan for supporting playwrights. Not all in our LORT theatre pool will be able to explore my suggested
plan due to mission or resources. Theatres can also be bound by precedents they have already set that agents and others might expect in the future. Adapting to working with artists and addressing their needs on a case by case basis will take time and careful negotiation. However, I believe this is a valuable method to consider for the future.

First, ask each playwright what they need. Instead of a one-size-fits-all program, theatres can cater to each individual playwright in planning its initiatives. I propose we create a hybrid of residency and commission that involves multiple financial benefits such as an initial commission payment, time paid when the playwright is in pre-production and rehearsal, and contributions toward insurance and child care costs.

Diversify the theatres portfolio of programs, not just the participants. Instead of having over twenty playwrights on commission in any given year, theatres can give fewer commissions. Theatres could use the savings to provide longer residency commitments to a number of writers who will most benefit from the experience. For instance, if an organization currently gives ten $12,000 commissions, it could instead provide five commissions at $10,000. With the remaining $70,000 it would have spent on commissions, the theatre can now provide an enhanced residency at $50,000. Adding payroll taxes of approximately $8,250 leaves $11,750 that can go toward health care premium contributions, the individual’s retirement savings plan, family care, and travel. This would be enhanced with office space, staff support, and other in-kind assistance.
A theatre could expand institutional budgetary line items that already cover its staff. Include guest artists in lines that provide for child care, healthcare, and office/working space. The entire organization would benefit from this program.

Will these changes make getting commissions more challenging and competitive? Yes, narrowing the pool of available commissions would make it more competitive. However, giving playwrights the resources to develop their career beyond one single play opens them up to more productions and therefore income from more plays. They can then move beyond needing commissions. The cycle continues with new writers.

Theatres are commissioning a wide range of playwrights and not just an elite few. Theatres are producing a larger percentage of the work under commission, therefore more playwrights are earning royalties off their finished work. These are reassuring trends.

Let us leave the large competitive cash awards to organizations like the Edgerton Foundation, The Kleban Prize, The Venturous Theater Fund, The MacArthur Foundation Genius Grant and others. Let them reward the writing and the writer. LORT theatres should be supporting the playwright’s relationship with the organization the same way it does its own staff. Redefine playwrights as integral staff members and treat them as such.

And if we are giving playwrights time to live and work within the organization as a resident, I propose that playwrights be involved in the leadership of those institutions. Let us make playwrights part of the decision-making team. I
suggest we empower the playwrights to take that leadership role seriously and see where they take us.

By redefining what it means to be a playwright – their role in theatrical organizations, their writing, mentoring other writers as teachers, being able to write for any medium – we redefine how they make a living. And by doing so, we will no longer have to buy into the mindset that playwriting is “a profession without an economic base”. Regional LORT theatres can set the example that changes the industry.
APPENDIX A

LORT THEATRES SURVEYED

(Category C – A)

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<th>ACT Theatre</th>
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<td>Alabama Shakespeare Festival</td>
<td>Manhattan Theatre Club*</td>
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<td>Alley Theatre*</td>
<td>McCarter Theatre</td>
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<td>Alliance Theatre*</td>
<td>Milwaukee Repertory Theatre</td>
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<td>American Conservatory Theater*</td>
<td>Northlight Theatre*</td>
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<td>Arena Stage*</td>
<td>Pasadena Playhouse*</td>
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<td>Arizona Theatre Company*</td>
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<td>Asolo Repertory Theatre</td>
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<td>Lincoln Center Theater*</td>
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*Indicates survey respondent
APPENDIX B

PLAYWRIGHTS SURVEYED

Luis Alfaro
Sheila Callaghan
Alison Carey
Erik Ehn
Michael Elyanow
Larissa Fasthorse
Gina Gionfriddo
Rickerby Hinds
Velina Hasu Houston
Rajiv Joseph
Lisa Kron
Laurel Meade
Jamie Pachino
Charles Randolph-Wright
JT Rogers
Lucy Thurber
Alice Tuan
Mfoniso Udofia
Karen Zacharias
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