



STAMP On the Road: How to tour your work

Tue 11 Jun – 1pm – 3pm

Stratford Circus Arts Centre, Theatre Square, E15 1BX

Panellists:

Kate McGrath, Director, Fuel

Laura Woodward, Farnham Maltings/house network

Nassy Konan, Producer, BAC

Helen Mugridge, freelance production manager

Joe Bates, Arts Council England touring lead

Initial Panel conversation

Why tour work?

It's important for work to reach the widest audience but it's also very important to make work that's appropriate for the place it is visiting. There needs to be a rational between the work being presented and organisation it is being presented at. Touring work ensures arts and culture doesn't just happen in silos

How should we approach venues to get our work programmed?

Knowledge of the local area of a venue is key, research the location, not just the venue. Look for shared missions between your organisation and the venues you would like to present work at. We are looking for collaborations with a company which shares audience development objectives, which starts with our local audience. Within your tour pack for venues include information about who you think the audience is for your production. This is just as important as the information about the show itself.

Generally a funding application to the arts council which states that "it's down to the venues to find the audience" will not be considered. This is because it's important to work in partnership to demonstrate an understanding about who the audience is for a tour across multiple venues.

It's important to have marketing pack which should include marketing assets which are relevant and help reach your audience.

What should be in a tour pack?

Not necessarily show copy – include tech info, info re target audience, trailer links, production shots, space required. It should be 2-3 pages max. Include marketing ideas, social media plans etc. Info re: audience sizes – is it an intimate show with a limited capacity or a huge show with lots of people involved? Remember a tour pack is for the programmer- to help them get a feel for you and your work.

It's important to include a headline about who you are and what you do.

Don't be afraid to call us up. Emails can take a while to respond to, whereas phone calls are more immediate.

Tour packs should link out to videos and external pages. Don't make it too info heavy- give the headlines and then link out so we can find out more about you.

It's a great idea to share tour packs with each other. Show your pack to other companies and artists you trust and ask them, 'would you programme this show?'



You mentioned 'knowing your audience' but that's such a hard thing to do... how can we go about this?

Have questions about who your audience may be in the forefront of your mind as you create and develop the work, rather than making something and then trying to find an audience for it.

There's a process you can go through... thinking about the themes and subject matter of your work and breaking down who might be interested in these themes. You'll soon become more confident breaking down your audiences. You can try getting data from venues about their audiences. Plus, just think about who the style, subject matter etc might appeal to. Often there might be several potential audiences for your show- from those who have a personal connection/ existing interest in the themes of the piece, to those you want to reach out to and engage with.

For example, if your work deals with gender, think more broadly about people who may have an interest in social issues- rather than specifically women.

Take a look at the audience agency's work around audience segmentation. It's extremely helpful.

I'm making an inclusive performance and am keen to ensure everyone can engage with it... any advice?

Think about ways to engage with audiences – what works for reaching one may not for another audience.

There used to be this idea that you had your show copy and that was that. Now you need to be more flexible- using different text and images to appeal and speak to different people. Have in your mind which elements of your show you are able to be flexible with and which you aren't.

If you're up for putting your work into community/ non-traditional theatre spaces, let programmers know that.

There's a huge amount going on in London. If you're interested in touring elsewhere, go there, speak to people, find out about the place and what's going on, as well as what resources are there.

A production manager can support you to facilitate that, by thinking about things in a practical way and feeding into conversations around what the physical possibilities are for your show.

Breakout table: Production manager – Helen

How and when to reach out to a Production manager + Level of Involvement

- The earlier the better for production manager to get involved in order for applications to potential venues to be as clear and realistic as possible. Informal contact (phone/email) is preferred rather than a tour pack. The more information you can offer the PM, the better.
- Conversations are best rather than 'employing' someone from the get go. This helps to explore what's feasible and achievable. The person you have a conversation with doesn't have to be production manager; it could be a stage manager you have worked with before. It's more important that you find someone that you like and is interested in your work and can offer practical advice. It is all about building a relationship.



- There isn't much of a network for PMs. There's a Facebook group for production managers which could be useful. The 'Mandy' website can also be useful for shout outs/ contacting production staff to start the conversation. *A member of the group suggested Linked in which she had used before.*
- Find out who the production manager is of a show you like and make contact. Find out the person who fits for you as that really helps out the process. Try and involve PM in everything (or give them the choice) – warm ups, games etc. as this helps with positive relationships within the team.

What is a production manager? What role do they play?

- The role can be blurry, but the aim is to facilitate the process. For a traditional show, the PM role finishes at opening night. For an independent artist, PM does take on Stage Manager, company manager, producer, and even lighting role and goes on further in the project past opening night.
- Artists should be open about the extra work you are asking a PM to do so they have the choice to take on the work or not. Artists also have to be realistic with themselves about how many roles they will be taking on as this can take a toll on the work and the relationship if it is a small team.
- The PM's role is to think about the work in the context that the artist wants to place it in. If you are planning on touring at some point or have any other ambition, let this be known as early as possible so this can be considered (e.g. set building, get ins and get outs).
- The PM liaises with venues for artists logistical requirements.

Scheduling and Other things.

- Artists should try and get involved in get-ins and get-out to understand how the process works and this can be fed into planning your next project.
- You can create multiple versions of the show (schools, studio, rural) to fit multiple venues on a tour.
- When planning and scheduling, take into consideration the context of the space. For example, schools can have 9am shows but usually can't access venue before 7am. This can affect get-ins.
- As an independent artist, you don't have much choice about venue dates you are offered. Speak to PM or even just the person that is driving your van if the dates offered mess up your schedule so that everyone is on board. It may be a 4 hour drive and a 2 hour get in but as long as you are transparent about this, it makes it easier.
- Consider the emotions and lifestyle of a production staff. They are humans, not robots. Although it may be cheaper, isolating production staff in a travel lodge with just a motorway nearby isn't lovely experience.



Breakout Table – Touring - Kate McGrath

Session 1

Question: Does a theatre company come to you with an idea once they have funding in place?

Answer: We develop things from the very beginning of an idea. Occasionally we might pick something up after a sharing or a scratch. But we don't pick up finished work.

Question: And how do those relationships come about?

Answer: Mainly invitations to work and meeting for conversations. Occasionally we will watch a video or read a script. But we don't have a huge capacity to read a lot of submitted work. But the team go and see work all of the time. Quite often we will go and see something and then have a conversation about what that artist wants to do next.

Question: And would they look for funding after that point.

Answer: We would lead on that. And help the artists articulate their development needs and who the appropriate partners for the work might be.

Question: My biggest concern as an artist, especially as Edinburgh gets more expensive, is do you need to do it?

Answer: It's a good question. When I first started it was a lot cheaper. The Ed Fringe used to be somewhere you could pick up a few more shifts before and after and subsidise out of your own pocket. That's all changed now. What I would say is be sure what you want you get out of it, because it is an investment. There is no way to make money out of it. So, if it is a UK tour that you want to get out of it, really focus your energy and make sure you invite the right programmers a long time in advance because they will be booked up a long time in advance. Get in touch with them now and really be keen about why you want them there, the fact you want to tour and when and where you are going to tour. Then maybe accept that there are certain things you are not going to do and you are not going to spend time and energy on. If the focus is to get programmers, perhaps you need to spend less money and energy on audiences, or vice versa. If you are going to rise above the vast amount of shows there, you need to be really clear on what success looks like for you.

The second thing is that you don't have to book a tour. Programmers know it's expensive to do Edinburgh so they are looking elsewhere for work also. Rachel Ofori who we are working with at the moment, I saw her show at CPT because she couldn't afford to go to Edinburgh We toured that show, then made another one and toured that and we're about to make a third with her.

There are also a lot of festivals about. Programmers like festivals because they can see quite a lot of shows at once. There's a few festivals that will do a weekend festival (e.g. Pulse in Ipswich) and programmers like them because it's a very efficient way to see work. Those other showcases are quite good and cheaper than Edinburgh. You only have to go for a few days rather than a month.

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Question: Do you get funding, British Council aside, to take show internationally? Would an international venue pay for a show in its entirety? Sometimes when I think about the scales of going abroad I wonder how that is even possible.

They do pay for it. The festivals and venues that programs that work are set up with the budgets to do it. So, the Melbourne International Festival knows that they will need to fly over the best work from around the world, so they will factor in a significant travel budget. None of that is a surprise to them. It's the bigger international programmes that do those things. That's what they're set up to do. That's what those festivals are, whereas the Fringe is a different model. There are venues and festivals in the first world that have those kinds of budgets to buy in international work.

We have toured, with help from the British Council, to parts of the world that don't have those resources and that's where the British Council becomes really useful. We've taken work to India, Pakistan, and tier 2 cities in China that aren't set up with large scale international festivals. If you're thinking about approaching the British Council, all of that funding currently comes from the ODA, which means there are zones in the world that are of strategic importance to the UK and can't afford it themselves and that is where they are interested in engaging with.

Question: Are there other models in the UK for international touring?

Farnham Maltings run a programme called Caravan, which includes part of Brighton Festival. You submit and there's a selection panel who look at the proposals and select a showcase for international programmers.

The other thing is filming material and sending it to international programmers. Programmers who programme international work are very used to watching filmed work.

Question: Would that be the show in its entirety or would you cut a teaser together?

It depends on the show. We would normally have both and send both of them together. A teaser would only be a couple of minutes, just to give a flavour of the work. I know it's probably hard, expensive and annoying to film your work, but it is so important.

SESSION 2

Question: If I want to tour my work internationally what do I need to do?

Film it, because a lot of international programmers won't be able to see it when it's on here. I think it's worth looking for opportunities to present at showcases where international programmers will be. A couple of people have mentioned Edinburgh. The last week of the festival every second year is the British Council showcase. You have to apply and they select some show for international programmers to go and see. But the fact that they are all there, means they will go and see thing that aren't in the programme. Edinburgh is obviously horribly expensive and it's a risk because if you're not in the show case they might come, they might not come.

The Caravan is another one. There will be a panel of selectors who will look at films and read about the world and they will select international programmers to come and see the

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work. Those kinds of things are great if you can get into them because it's a captive audience. But, if you can't get into one of those, then filming the work is really important. And like UK touring, it's about working out why that piece of work needs to go to that particular place. Thinking about why would an audience in Sydney be interested in seeing your work?

We took a piece of work about the African diaspora and we spent a lot of time thinking about how it connects to audiences there? We spent a lot of time talking to the programmers about the themes of the show about migration and diaspora. We tried to reach south-east Asian audiences there, and indigenous communities who might be interested in themes of colonialism. A lot of work went into thinking about who we could connect to there.

When we took the same show to America, we spent more time thinking about male incarceration, which just isn't as much of a thing in Australia.

Question: Are there regions that are good or not so good for touring?

Answer: It depends on the work, what's it about, and what scale it is. Broadly speaking, first-world countries have international festivals with budgets to buy in work from abroad. Developing countries tend not to have those. So, if you were looking to tour work to those countries you might want to be connecting with the British Council to see if it fit into their priorities.

What language it's in will also inform those decisions. There are Scandinavian countries where English is widely spoken but, in my experience, central and southern Europe are less up for heavily text-based work in English.

If you're working in a particular art form, it might be that there is a street festival where you just need to take your work because that is the pinnacle of where your discipline can be presented.

There are some international networks around particular art forms. There is an international network around work for young people. There might be one around circus also. International programmers peak to each other so if you could connect with someone in that network who might be able to speak to other programmers in the network who can become an advocate for you work.

Question: Can I ask about Latitude Festival? That seems to be another place that international programmers go to?

Answer: Latitude had a really brilliant arts programmer who has just left. I don't know what is going to happen with it now; I assume they'll appoint someone new. The reason international programmers came is that she programmed a bunch of really fantastic performance and a big range of stuff, which I guess brought people. Programmers love festivals because you can see a lot of work in a short space of time.

Question: When you were talking earlier about how you would connect with specific groups in particular places, what do you mean? How would you connect with those people?



Answer: I guess for us international touring is as much about connecting with the people and the place as it is about doing a show in a theatre. In terms of international touring, I often think one of the biggest rewards is when the artists can see work and meet people and meet other artists. Squeezing the pips out of the experience. So, in terms of what that means, when we tour internationally, when I'm meeting with the programmers, we will discuss how it can help them achieve something they want to achieve. How does our show help them reach the audience they're trying to reach? They would give me a whole load of context that I didn't know about the way they were working and what they wanted to do and at some point, those conversations would develop with our engagement producer. They might say, we have a partnership with a university, and we want to do a symposium while you're there. And we would say great, but we also want to do an event in local barber shop, meet a local pastor, get out there into the community.

Breakout Session: Joe Bates, ACE

Group 1

I'm interested in touring to prisons and working with people who don't have access to the arts. Are there companies doing that?

- Yes- Clean Break and Dance United for example are doing that kind of work.

How difficult is that process?

- It's difficult but possible. You need very strong contacts and relationships with local authorities, etc.
- One of the Conservatoire of Scotland's focuses is working in prisons.
- Look into The Actors Gang – a company in New York/ San Francisco who are doing that kind of work.

I've been told that ACE will always turn down your first funding application, so you should just submit one to get it out the way, regardless of the quality. Is this true?

- No.
- ACE is going to focus on development work to dispel this kind of myth.
- If people are putting in poor quality applications, it's a waste of everyone's time. We need to focus on stopping resources being wasted and instead educating people about the things they need to have in place to make their application good.
- For example, partnerships really strengthen applications, as well as the artist having a strong track record. We look at who is supporting this artist (organisations and other artists) as well as public engagement and how successfully an application articulates who the work is going to reach.
- Think about referencing the Audience Agency's segmentation around demographics, as well as the Active Lives research.
- Talk about numbers (how many people are you going to reach).
- Include a strong activity plan including logistical matters and a really clear and detailed marketing breakdown.
- Talk about the experience of your team.



- When it comes to finances, confirmed money is always better than predicted income.
- You'll need at least 10% match funding. Cash, as well as in-kind support is always preferable.
- Look at the diversity of your income and think about how realistic and financially viable your project is.

In terms of earned income, can we include money from the bar, merchandise, etc?

- Yes.
- We'll be looking at how achievable your targets are and how you articulate this.
- At the end of the day, the panel is just people sat in a room making decisions. To be successful, you need to give us all of the information we need to make that decision.

How are applications assessed?

- Applications for under £15,000 are checked by grant management in Manchester, and then sent to the area the application originated from, where a relationship manager looks at them and makes a decision about the quality of the application.
- For grants over £15,000, they're checked and logged, then appraised, before being sent to a panel to make the decision.
- There are roughly 60 applications sent to panel per week – which translates into 2 panels per week, each viewing roughly 30 applications.

Does ACE prioritise projects that work with people in areas of low engagement?

- It depends.
- It needs to be relevant and proportionate to your project, rather than tokenistic. If it adds to the offer currently in a place of low engagement/ where there is a lack of infrastructure then yes, this is something we'd be looking support.

I do lots of work around being a single mum. When it comes to touring, are childcare costs something you can include in the access section of your application?

- Yes, as long as your case is clearly made.

How does it work with touring outside of London?

- If you're showing work in London, with just a couple of dates outside the capital you're then automatically classed as 'national'. This means you'll be up against companies touring with lots of dates, all over the country – be aware if this.
- If you're applying from London to tour outside the capital (for example, just in the South East) this will still fall under 'national' activity- because your home address is in London. This is the case even if you're only touring in a very specific area- if it's outside London and you're based in London, its 'national' activity.

How many tour dates should we look to have?

- There is no set number of dates you need. It must be appropriate for your work.



Group 2

How do you get started with an application?

- Register on the system and get a username.
- Then open a new application form.
- Top tip- the online form can be very clunky – it's a good idea to write your application in Word and then paste it into the online form.
- There are three tiers of funding: under £15,000, £15,000- £100,000 and £100,000+
- We assess applications against 4 criteria:
 - Quality
 - Public engagement
 - Management
 - Finance
- For 'quality', we rely on you telling us about your track record as well as the record of your team and collaborators.
- For 'public engagement' as we spoke about in the panel, refer to the Active Lives research and show you have an understanding of the ecology of the area.
- Be specific about numbers and include explanations. For example, if your reach will be limited, explain how you'll be impacting the people you work with. Talk about the future engagement and legacy of the project as well as the immediate impact.
- For 'management', refer to confirmed partnerships/ collaborations. Provide a clear action and project plan.

Is it best to get your tour dates booked before applying to ACE?

- Yes.
- In your tour schedule you can detail what stage you're at. But yes, if at all possible, get your dates booked in before applying for funding.

Any more finance advice?

- In terms of income, include info about your different income streams, e.g. earned income, contributed by donors or sponsors, other funding such as seed funding and support in kind.
- If you're running workshops for example, and the fee you receive only just covers the cost of the workshops, you can still include this in your financial plan, even if the money comes in and goes straight back out again- it all contributes to income in your budget and lowering the percentage of your expenditure you're asking ACE for.
- Spend the contingency! It's very difficult to give money back to ACE!

Can we apply to ACE for funding to go to the Edinburgh Fringe?

- Up to 10% of your tour can take place outside of England- so the dates would need to stack up. So, if you wanted to do 5 dates in Edinburgh, you'd have to be planning 45 dates in England!
- If you can self-fund your Edinburgh dates, you can include this in your application, but make it really clear this is being externally funded.



- Look into courses on finance and budgeting.
- The Nursery Theatre is running an 'introduction to producing' workshop soon.

How far in advance should we apply?

- This is project-specific, but it's a good idea to leave plenty of time so that you have contingency should your project not receive its funding.

Do you come and see shows funded by ACE?

- Yes!
- We like to have at least 4 weeks' notice to come and see a show.

Final panel questions

How do we go about building community connections in non-traditional spaces?

- This can be time-consuming.
- Ask venues – lots of us will be happy to share their information.
- Think about people already working intelligently in that setting, who you may be able to work with or learn from.
- Don't drop in and leave too quickly- think about multiple/longer visits somewhere, as opposed to one night.
- Think about spheres of influence- who do I know? Who do they know? And who do they know?
- Think outside the arts. Other organisations and charities can make wonderful partners.
- It can feel overwhelming, but there are some great networks out there who can support you. Checkout House Network, Venues North, Future Arts Centres. Research and get in touch with those networks that already exist.

As a new company, what should the scale of your first tour be?

- There's no one answer.
- Each application for tour funding needs to be taken on its own merit, and we need to consider what it's going to achieve. It's about the appropriateness of your plans, and responding to demand or need. This could mean touring to 3 places or 30. Talk about the reach of your project. The impact it will have on people, as well as the audiences it will build for venues.
- Think about the practical considerations - how much does it cost to mount the show? If it costs a lot, you may want to consider a longer run as opposed to lots of shorter dates.

If you have two shows to tour, should you offer the cheaper of the two to a venue first and then hope to bring the other at a later date?

- Yes, that sounds very logical and strategic.
- Think about wraparound activity as well, such as activity in foyers and community.

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Final tips

- Check out rural touring networks in different regions.
- Have a look at the National Regional Touring Forum.
- There are also lots of library networks.
- Think about building into your show the ability to scale it up or down to work in different spaces. This is attractive to programmers.
- If you can be flexible about something, make this clear in your tour pack