

**Touring Forum
Thursday 21 April 2016 – 2-5pm
Edinburgh Festival Theatre**

Chair – Sam Eccles

Attendees:

Alex Bird (Tortoise in a Nutshell), George Carson , Joan Cleville , Jennifer Cummins (Imagine), Scott Kyle (Bathgate Regal), Rebecca Davis (Stellar Quines Theatre Company), Anna Derricourt (Catherine Wheels Theatre Company), Michael Emans (Rapture Theatre), Alana Friell (East Renfrewshire Council), Janice Gilmour (Palace Complex), Sarah Gray (Cumbernauld Theatre), Evan Henderson (Fife Cultural Trust), Janie Hopkins (East Renfrewshire Council), Marta Mari (Asylon Theatre), Jo McLean (The Touring Network, Highlands & Islands), Rishaad Moudden (Ayr Gaiety), Vina Oberlander (Hearts & Minds), Nick Parr (Dundee Rep), Jennifer Phillips, Liam Sinclair (Scottish Dance Theatre), Kate Taylor, Kirsty Taylor (Scottish Borders Council), Ben Torrie (Aberdeen Performing Arts), Gabrielle Renahan (East Renfrewshire Council), Ed Robson (Cumbernauld Theatre), Sam Rowe , Pamela Walker (National Theatre of Scotland), David Williams (Cumbernauld Theatre).

FST: Jon Morgan, Agnieszka Swida, Amanda Liddle

1. Introductions

SE welcomed attendees to the forum meeting and led introductions noting that this was the first of the forum meeting to be chaired by a member and encouraged other members to take up this opportunity in the future.

2. FST Update

JM provided an update on current FST activities as follows:

- Very positive feedback has been received following this year's Emporium but there is still time to provide further comments , contact [Amanda](#).
- [Culture Counts](#) , the umbrella group which advocates for the value and importance of culture to life in Scotland, hosted a Culture Hustings on 14th May during which Fiona Hyslop referenced a possible National Touring Fund for Scotland (mentioned in the SNP manifesto). A podcast of the event is available to access [here](#). Culture Counts have also produced an election [toolkit](#) to help you voice opinion in the 2016 Scottish Parliament election.
- FST will be hosting a second session of the '[Producing Your Own Work](#)' workshop on the 28th April 1-4pm at the Tron Theatre as part of the Creative Scotland funded Producer's Hub programme.
- FST are also supporting a number of [bursaries](#) for members to attend the [Theatre 2016 conference](#) in London 12-13 May. The deadline for applications is 27 April.
- The next Dance Forum is being held in Findhorn -6 May - further details can be found [here](#).
- The next Producers Forum will be held at the Citizen's Theatre on 9 June – further details and agenda will be available shortly.

- The next Members' Meeting will take place on Wednesday, 22 June 2016 at Carnegie Hall in Dunfermline from 10.30am.
- The next Technical Forum will be held 24 June at RCS in Glasgow.

3. Creative Scotland Update – Lorna Duguid

LD provided an update on Creative Scotland’s current position on resources for touring projects:

- There is a will within CS to fund mid and large-scale touring projects and to removing barriers to cross-border touring
- In reference to the Theatre Review, LD noted that there still seemed to be a lack of work available to tour
- Two new touring networks have now been established in the Borders and Dumfries and Galloway and there has been investment in Tourbook
- You can apply to ACE to support dates in England along with an application for CS project funding and there is now no restriction on cross border touring
- CS have invested in data collection including ongoing support of Culture Republic
- CS are committed to analysing issues around touring as part of the Annual Plan

LD presented financial data for 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 which she hopes to be able to circulate in due course, pending approval. In summary the data shows the following:

- Funding for dance and theatre touring has not been reduced with the introduction of Open Project Funding
- Funding for dance has doubled over the period

		12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
PROJECT FUNDING	DANCE	0.3M	0.4M	0.5M	0.6M
	THEATRE	1M	1.4M	0.9M	1.2M
	TOTAL	1.3M	1.8M	1.4M	1.8M
ARTS PROGRAMMING		NO FIGURES AVAILABLE	0.7M	0.5M	0.8M
	TOTAL	1.3M	2.5M	1.9M	2.6M

LD also referenced the previous strategic commissioning fund which was not positively received and that she is interested to hear the forums ideas on how touring can be more effectively resourced under CS funding mechanisms.

Q&A

LD agreed that given the £100K-150K cap on OPF applications that applicants were realistically only looking at mid-scale rather than large scale projects unless a range of partners could be found. It was pointed out however that non RFO funded organisations struggle to attract multiple funding collaborators given the resource required to achieve this.

LD confirmed that there has been little change to the range of applications received in scale and financial terms excepting dance projects (some of which are of higher budgets).

4. Who Pays for Touring? Part 1

Discussion around to what extent venues/programmers can or should support or even subsidize touring shows (e.g. fees, guarantees, box office splits etc.)

Key Themes:

Financial Risk/Fees

Even well-funded organisations now struggle to take risks on touring product whether because of financial constraints or conservative boards.

Companies/artists are struggling to get guaranteed fees with larger venues moving toward box office splits. Some commitment is required from venues in achieving a certain level of fee, raising the issue of whether the subsidy should be awarded to venues to guarantee this.

The financial risk often results in short runs/ one night shows, which in turn impacts negatively on audience engagement and box office return.

Time frames and models

There is frustration for venues that hold dates for shows with funding applications pending and then have to re-book the dates when these applications are not successful. Longer term planning is required with opportunities for venues/artists to discuss work at a much earlier stage (e.g. FST Early Dialogue Day) being extremely useful.

Venue programming and the funding application process needs to be more aligned and forward planned.

Other models of working were noted, including Denmark, which operates a matched funding scheme between government and venues allowing a selected number of works to tour, this model also strategically balances the range of work being made available to audiences.

LD confirmed that CS is researching other European models but there is a risk of this kind of model being prescriptive and excluding artists/companies.

As resources are finite the question of quantity of touring product was discussed with the option of funding fewer products for longer runs.

Audience Development

Venues are key to supporting companies to market their shows however there is a need for further CPD in this area.

There is a risk that venues, required to programme a proportion of very cost effective product that is not always deemed high quality, can become unattractive to certain

companies/artists. This in turn diminishes their reputation with related audience segments, making it harder to attract that audience back for alternative products.

Companies can develop their audience by offering more accessible work in the first instance and then 'moving them on' to more complex work – however more market data is required as we make too many assumptions around what audiences view as 'challenging work'.

Rural Touring Schemes are essential to engaging enough venues to offset financial risks to companies and assist in audience development.

Budget cuts for venues often start with the marketing budget but this is where we need to invest to ensure the cultural shift required to support touring productions.

There is a real lack of market intelligence – can CS take a role in addressing this? We cannot address the issues around touring until we have clarity about where the market failure lies.

5. Who Pays for Touring? – Part 2:

Discussion on whether a more strategic touring fund would better support touring and / or address current issues with touring.

SE noted that this discussion topic was not driven by CS but was a question the sector had intimated a wish to discuss. SE introduced the topic by looking at some key facts on the Arts Council England Strategic Touring Fund and its evaluation:

The strategic Touring Programme was launched in 2011 as part of ACE's Strategic Funding Programme. The budget for 2011-2015 was £45m. The mean size of grant £207,439

The objectives of the fund were stated as:

- Better access of high quality work for people in England who rely on touring for much of their arts provision
- More high quality work to reach people and places with the least engagement
- More high quality work on tour connecting more effectively, with people accessing a wide range of venues
- Strong relationships are forged between those involved in artistic, audience and programme development on both the supply and demand sides of touring
- A wide range of high quality work on tour, including in particular, more work by and for children and young people and more work by and for people from diverse backgrounds.

The evaluation for the fund which took place in October 2015, found that the fund:

- Improved access to art

- Made an important contribution to regional balance
- Has generally focused on areas and people with low engagement
- Has strengthened relationships between touring supply and demand - 92% of respondents said the fund have changed their organisations approach to touring
- That the application process was unusually onerous with an average of 26.5 days being taken on the application
- That that impact on audiences could be higher

Key Themes:

If CS support for touring has not reduced and yet there is a widely held perception of a reduction in suitable touring product, is there a way of allocating funding resources more strategically?

The danger of a protected 'ring fenced' fund is that the work becomes separated strategically and/or becomes more prescribed. There needs to be a more strategic way of spending the money available – possibly utilising the touring networks more.

LD noted that CS will be mapping touring activity across Scotland to identify gaps in provision.

Before we look at implementing a new model we need to know what we're trying to achieve and again this revolves around creating and interrogating market data more effectively.

A longer term strategy of audience development and data collection is required which will require confidence from funders in a strategy to affect cultural change. The time is required to really interrogate what audiences want. There needs to be commitment from CS to fund strategic, long term audience development work.

Again the issue of doing less work more strategically with more resources allocated towards audience development was noted but would CS support its funded organisations to do this?

The issue of applications by consortia was raised with LD acknowledging that the 150K upper limit was still an issue here – members also noted that partnership projects can also come with practical and artistic issues.

6. Topics for Next Forum

It was agreed that in order to keep up momentum on this topic that FST would look at scheduling the next Touring Forum in June rather than autumn and focus the meeting on audience development and data gathering.

Action: members to forward any case studies of successes or failures in audience development to [Jon](#).

