



# *Theatre & Touring* SYMPOSIUM 2018

## *Report*

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# Introduction

**The Theatre and Touring Symposium was held on 18 June 2018.**

The day was an opportunity for the theatre sector to come together to discuss and tackle shared issues, leading to real and practical change.

The Symposium included six discussion sessions on topics suggested by the sector. Each discussion was facilitated. Each discussion was started by hearing thoughts from figures from across the sector and other areas.

**This report is drawn from the notes taken in those discussions, and the notes provided by the discussion facilitators.**

It sets out the key points made in those sessions, and the suggested practical actions for UK Theatre and the Society of London Theatre to take forward with colleagues across the industry.

Discussion facilitators and conversation starters have been named here. Specific examples or resources have been given. Comments from delegates to the Theatre and Touring Symposium have not been attributed.

# Discussion One

## *How can we create efficiencies and be more responsive to economic change?*

Facilitator: Jon Gilchrist, Executive Director of [HOME](#)

Jon set out two key questions;

- 1) How do we respond to the changing economic landscape and lack of disposable income?
- 2) How can we be more efficient in generating funds – looking inside and outside the theatre sector?

Comments from conversation starter Jessica Koravos of the [Really Useful Group](#) (whose observations were also drawn from the music industry and the US theatre model) included:

- Theatres/venues must share the risk with producers - should we be looking at other models to ensure producers have more economic benefits and less risk?
- An organisation method that allows the maximum number of shows to happen because it's being centrally organised is effective.

Comments from conversation starter Suzanne Alleyne of [Apples and Snakes](#) and an [Arts Council](#) Changemaker:

- If you're venue based your most costly assets are your building and your staff. How much are you using of your staff's engagement, abilities and resources? Staff are an investment - manage that investment.

Comments from conversation starter Mark Dakin, Technical Director of the [Royal Opera House](#):

- Including technical expertise in early producing decisions will reduce costs – consider the tech requirements and potential issues as the production develops.

## Discussion:

- Are we making effective use of box office data, across the country and in the west end?
- Using a commercial ticketing agent gives us the ability to communicate with people outside of our (limited) demographics.
- Put the logistics first (as is done more often in music). In theatre we have a more collaborative and designed process – which is harder to make efficient in touring.
- Models merging operations and staff are evolving.
- Share expertise and experience (including marketing ideas) – if problems have been cracked share the solutions – we’re not in a competition with each other.
- Form local mergers, partnerships and communities.

## Jon Gilchrist’s feedback to the full symposium:

- Sharing examples of practice: some problems have already been cracked – so let’s share the learning. Information is power!
- Take inspiration from anywhere (and don’t forget your own staff): we’re working in an industry where people want to be here. What happens when we harness their ideas?
- As you think about diversity, consider how you’re bringing in diverse thinking and opinions.
- Get your tech team involved early in the process.

# Discussion Two

## *How do we negotiate societal & technological change to stay relevant to audiences?*

Facilitator: Mark Skipper, Chief Executive of [Northern Ballet](#)

For many arts organisations the fear of technology taking away from the live experience was daunting. Theatre has caught up and there is a plethora of content. Where do we go from here?

Comments from conversation starter Anna Lowe of [Smartify](#):

- Smartify is a community interest company set up to/working to support financial resilience and audience reach at museums and galleries. It is a platform to identify artwork using image recognition technology.
- Smartify wanted to create more engaging experiences for visitors (accessibility, augmented reality). Smartify is connecting the creative experience and engaging with audiences.

Comments from conversation starter Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director of the [Young Vic](#):

- It's not just about access, it's about technology's ability to bypass a critical part of my mind and go into my blood stream – augmented reality. To make me talk to someone about it and want to share it.
- Listen to young people, who are you and what is the work you want to make?
- If you want to use VR/AR and mixed media - we tell artists that wherever and whatever you wish to make - you are welcome at Young Vic.
- How do we challenge those who see technology as something different to creating live theatre? Technology is what we are doing. If we want to talk to a younger audience, we have to invest not just money but heart and soul in these technologies.
- Make sure who is in the room is also part of the room. Bring them into the heart of story; they are the story. People want to be part of the story, not just participate. Participatory AR is key.

## Discussion:

- Given costs involved; our job is to create the experience, and then find price point that people will want to pay.
- Tech can help us shift from theatre as a passive way of consuming to democratisation and participation e.g. in a simulation (Star Wars AR or Detroit video game), story has decision trees. Making decisions makes you feel like you are in the room. Build a room you can share with other people.
- [Pilot theatre](#): Provide livestreaming and digital solutions – to make exploring digital capture and distribution more accessible and affordable for smaller theatre companies.
- Is this a minefield: expectation of creatives or artists, etc. Where does the money come from? Is it for profit?
- Resources (funding, training, low cost R&D) are available from [thespace.org](#), a digital commissioning agency.
- UK Theatre is working with The Space to come up with a framework for negotiating Digital Rights.
- Balance live and digital experiences so it is complementary not conflicting e.g. [Northern Ballet](#) CBeebies partnership - children's ballets broadcast annually - an invaluable way for more children to access our work and for us to raise our brand profile. However, there's a decline in sales for the live tour and we're keen to understand if it's linked.
- How do we develop genuinely effective audience development strategies to give young people a pathway from digital experiences into the live work? If we give young people who are technologically savvy and orientated great digital cultural experiences that they can access wherever they are, will it really encourage them to move onto the live experience, or are we encouraging a preference for the digital experience above the live experience?
- If audience preferences do shift from live experience to digital experience, how will our business models adapt to reflect this change? How would we monetise digital work to compensate for ticketed income?
- In today's world, societal and technological change is rapid; trends can be lasting or short-lived. A few years ago, 3D was the next big thing and now everyone's talking about Virtual Reality or augmented reality. How can organisations identify which changes or trends to invest in and how easy is it for organisations to adapt quickly to these changes, particularly if you are a funded organisation?

- How do we adapt our resources to accommodate the digital age? How do we ensure our staff have the relevant skills and knowledge and how do we upskill our existing workforce when many employees will have no experience in the digital field? Larger organisations may be able to divert resources, but smaller ones could feel stretched.
- Theatre is lagging behind other artforms. Our buildings were designed for an old-school way of theatre – so we have to think about how to use our infrastructure. If we are designing new theatres – it’s just a box, we can move stuff around inside as much as we want to.
- The same model of building developments will not maintain innovation. Buildings will regress into heritage buildings showing heritage arts. Instead they must be fit for the future.
- People with disabilities can experience barriers getting to buildings – digital helps overcome this. E.g. Audio description for live streaming and digital.
- Consider neurodivergence rather than disability.
- It can be very tempting to assume that digital is for young people. In fact it fits in with sequencing our lives differently. That’s resilience.
- A large part of our audience are not digital natives – and will remain a crucial part of our audiences.
- Live screening: There are small regional venues where touring theatre has been squeezed out by filmed presentations. The offer for local people is extremely high end / local am dram. The middle ground of socially challenging content has gone.
- Independent artists could innovate in this area. It would be a missed opportunity if all innovation came from larger organisations. The Space offers grants for individuals and smaller organisations. Bigger organisations could support independents to push this forward.
- Some great collaborations: Barbican, Tate Britain, NT. They create interactive productions. There is a legacy even if the audience is small. Theatres should be creative in the way they programme & should support smaller work.
- Stop seeing different platforms (TV, livestream, etc.) as same thing. We can be creative about work created for a different platform, and about how we can make work that has different experiences.
- Places are doing immersive/interactive/VR outside traditional theatre spaces (e.g. Secret Cinema).

## Mark Skipper's feedback to the full symposium:

- For the current Arts Council funding round, Northern Ballet has committed to a substantial programme of digital work over the next four years. This includes our children's ballets broadcast on CBeebies, our main-scale work live streamed into cinemas, a library of direct to digital short films, a mid-scale work exclusively for digital and live streaming of our mixed programmes online, amongst other things.
- We've spent a lot of time considering how this sits alongside our live programme, making sure the programme complements, not conflicts, the live offer. Some of the things we have considered include:
  - How does the work fit in with our artistic vision yet provide something new?
  - How do we use digital to develop new audiences and how do we develop these into audiences for our live work?
  - How do we time our digital work for maximum impact?
  - What are the resources required to effectively deliver on this new strategy?

## The questions for UK Theatre to consider are:

- Theatre buildings are still of traditional design. How do we look at the infrastructure of our buildings to allow audiences to become more immersed in performances? This would involve looking at the design of new theatre buildings from the outset.
- Funding was an area of general concern. The Space (with UK Theatre) are looking at a code of conduct and coming up with a scale of fees for digital presentation. They also have funding streams available. But how can larger organisations support smaller organisations? What can UK Theatre do to broker and encourage more collaboration?
- Live streaming of high art is potentially squeezing out mid-size productions. How do we ensure that our venues balance the use of live technology and watching performances digitally versus maintaining audiences for traditional theatre? Will we ever reach a stage where the audience's preference for the digital experience outweighs that of the live experience?
- Digital is not just for young people. How do we ensure that it remains valid and accessible to audiences of all ages and all abilities?

# Discussion 3

## *How can we improve the working culture of theatre?*

Facilitator: Niamh Flanagan, Executive Director of [TheatreNI](#)

- There is a new TheatreNI Members Assistance Programme. [UK Theatre have produced a handbook](#), including 10 principles to help guide our approach, and have introduced a new [Theatre Helpline](#).
- Issues we are dealing with include low pay, overwork, a hierarchical structure, lack of professional development and lack of training to address our skill shortages.

Comments from conversation starter Brenna Hobson, Executive Producer of [National Theatre Scotland](#)

- At Belvoir theatre, Australia, there was an issue with gender representation in the 2010 season (1/10 directors was a woman).
- In response and with a new Artistic Director for the 2011 season they set a 50% 'overnight' target and met that target for directors. The company also raised its level of women playwrights; 30% the following year and 50% the year after.
- It is difficult – but you just need to do it.
- We need to recognise that power imbalance is a factor.
- Cultural shift has to be about openness. We need to remind ourselves that it shouldn't be happening.

Comments from conversation starter Kate Varah, Executive Director of [The Old Vic](#)

- Following the Old Vic's handling of high profile historical allegations, we were able to inform a robust piece of work around workplace culture.

- The big question for us was why potential issues were not escalated, when we and organisations experiencing similar issues had the right process and structures in place?
- We realised that there was a gap in provision between a 'water cooler' conversation with a colleague about something concerning and formalising that concern with HR, line management or unions.
- To address that gap we introduced the [Guardians Programme](#).
- Guardians are trained members of staff who volunteer to act as a neutral, confidential listening service, signposting those who come to them to the right processes and support routes within the organisation.
- Guardians are trained in the organisations own culture, policies and procedures; and they are also trained in soft skills (listening, how to respond without advising).
- Guardians do not replace formal processes; far from it, they provide a route-map of how to access them. They demystify the process and encourage individuals to use their voice in situations where previously they may not have felt empowered to raise an issue that concerned them.
- The Old Vic scheme was created not by management taking a top down approach but by workshopping and brainstorming with current staff, freelancers and our artistic associates.
- Guardians will flag in advance that if potentially criminal conduct is being discussed, the Guardian will break confidentiality to escalate. If the person prefers not to share any further as a result, they are signposted to confidential helplines, HR, line managers, unions.
- Organisations should make sure they do proper inductions and welcomes for staff that include reference to the Guardians scheme.
- It is worth noting that although this programme was shaped from the grassroots, senior management and the board also need to have buy-in for it to be truly effective.
- It provides continuity - especially for freelancers. It creates a common language between buildings, and increases the likelihood of issues being escalated.
- The Guardians are effectively brand ambassadors for The Old Vic culture as well as its policies and procedures. To ensure that our culture was clearly articulated beyond the values set out in our business plan, The Old Vic created a more fulsome cultural statement which used the excellent SOLT/UK Theatre Principles as a basis and springboard.

- To inform the Cultural Statement, a series of sessions called “OK/Not OK” ran with staff to workshop scenarios and discuss what is and is not acceptable behaviour. Most of these scenarios highlight grey areas and nuances rather than agreed codes (for which we refer to the SOLT/UK Theatre Principles), so the cultural statement is not didactic, but based around morals of respect and empathy that all those working within the organisation should adhere to.
- The Old Vic embed this commitment in the fibre of the organisation by consistently renewing training, sharing with all staff who enter the building via the Meet & Greet (and other initiatives), and presenting this alongside the Guardians scheme.
- The Guardians programme is being rolled out more widely. It became apparent to The Old Vic, the more organisations that they spoke to, that this scheme had universal application. A Guardians Network was formed to bring together a group of organisations from all sectors (not just the arts). A practical guide has been written and is shared freely on The Old Vic website so there is no barrier to implementation no matter what size the organisation or the level of their resource. And, through the Network, organisations can access pro bono legal training for their Guardians three times a year from Lewis Silkin, share best practice within the group on anonymised trends and learnings and centralise resources.
- Contact Executive Director, Kate Varah, for further information, or to join the [Guardians Network](#), contact Head of Business Development, Rowena Russell .

### Discussion:

- Hull Truck: is committed to a 50/50 split in gender on-stage in their productions. Training and gender balance in other roles should be considered i.e. female technicians.
- Give feedback; it is critical to career development. Take the time because it’s important and fair.
- Chichester Festival Theatre is working with a list of female creatives – it’s a reminder.
- Communicate that behaviours are no longer acceptable: have the conversation.
- At a contractual level: obligate staff and freelancers to attend disability training and safeguarding.
- Mental health training. Staff are encouraged to approach their employer if they have mental health issues ([training is available from UK Theatre](#)).

- Include legislation refresher training for staff and freelancers ([training is available from UK Theatre](#)).
- Include freelancers: don't think it's not worth the hassle
- If more venues have Guardians, freelancers have consistency.
- Universities and FE have a key role too; in setting expectations of new entrants to the industry.

**Niamh Flannagan's feedback to the full symposium:**

- How can we measure success?
- If no one uses the services on offer it doesn't mean it's not working. Some things, e.g. number of female directors, are easier to measure than workplace health and wellbeing. For example, the success of the Guardian's programme and the Theatre Helpline will not be based on how many people utilise them, because it's hoped that they will help change the culture of speaking out.
- Use SOLT and UK Theatre's [10 Principles and guidance](#).

# Discussion 4

## *Venues & producers: new ways of working*

Facilitator: Rachel Tackley, Chief Executive of [Chichester Festival Theatre](#)

Comments from conversation starter Ed Snape, Chief Executive of [Fiery Angel](#) and Chair of the [League of Independent Producers \(LIP\)](#)

- LIP had considered a new code of practice between venues and producers to ensure transparency upfront, because producers are finding it very tough.
- LIP has looked at ticketing charges – in West End and regions – but knows that 90% of the discussion is about touring and the relationship with venues.
- Different venues have a different understanding of what costs producers should bear – producers often do not know what is coming until the charge arrives.
- LIP's suggestion: a pro-forma deal memo. The theatre declares all revenue deductions and venue costs – anything that decreases the revenue to the producer. So that in a short space of time it is possible to see what all costs would be.
- ATG offers a clear deal memo, though some costs are not included.
- Settlements are so complex, mistakes happen both sides.
- Let's get to something simpler, so we can tour more shows and sell more tickets.

Comments from conversation starter Louise Chantal, Chief Executive of [Oxford Playhouse](#)

- Most venues would agree – we all broadly want the same thing – to build and diversify audience and do good work.
- More transparency and fairness is due to us all.
- In Oxford, the relationship between touring producers and venues has got more difficult/tense. There is less trust. Guarantees have doubled.

- Some organisations do not behave as well as others. The consequences of not being transparent are that commercial producers will be cut out of the regional (and subsidised) touring network. This will lead to more and more consortia producing.
- The industry has changed its entire mode of working – from producing to receiving.
- There is less control over quality and availability of work to our audiences.
- Getting info immediately after heads of terms would be beneficial. It is difficult to get heads of terms from some producers.
- Tour bookers will offer a show, we pencil it into the schedule, we may build a season around it. While trying to get to the deal we can come right up to brochure deadline, and finally get to a deal we can't afford. It's a very difficult decision to pull or replace, or go ahead with the financial risk.
- Commercial producers don't come as often to our venues. They bring star-led projects and do build audience.
- This allows us to 'stretch' at the middle scale. This can't happen if we don't have big commercial producers to support that season.
- Venues do talk, even if they are 40 miles apart.
- A template deal memo is the way forward.

#### Discussion:

- Venues and producers do have exchanges - a deal memo may not reflect discussions on phone. This leads to trust issues.
- If we can establish a baseline of trust it helps with discussions.
- Theatres have lost Local Authority support so their income is now more important. We can get back to a better level of trust if we are clear about the cost of putting a show on e.g. royalties from production side.
- Consortia e.g. Music & Lyrics can help to break down the barrier between venues and producers. It's possible to see all the figures, the baseline costs, etc.
- How enforceable is it? Of all shows that have folded recently, none of the producers have been UK Theatre members (though the shows were due to appear in UK Theatre venues).

- A deal memo could only really work if all league members were UK Theatre members. If producers or venues defaulted, there could be an impact on their membership.
- Could this be another barrier to membership of UK Theatre for smaller venues? Membership already requires you to agree to the UK Theatre terms and conditions.
- Consider that there is a diverse range of producers, working across different management bodies (i.e. UK Theatre and ITC).
- Independent companies are producing large scale work – why add an extra layer of admin through heads of terms. It should be straightforward to reach a contract once the deal is negotiated and agreed.
- Some felt a full contract unrealistic immediately. Instead there could be a short window where the producer knows what all the types of costs will be, with contracts and exact costs to follow later.
- At the point of pencilling dates all parties need to be able to start talking about money. If venues are holding shows far ahead e.g. 2022, it's possible now that they don't know costs. We have to talk money earlier, or to negotiate from four weeks to two. This comes down to trust again.
- Being a lead producer on tour to subsidised houses is a good way of working out technical costs up front, and understanding that every tech contra is different. There are no identical fit ups and openings. Use a template so that everyone can see what they are spending in advance.
- Use an exhaustive list of things that might have a financial impact on a deal. UK Theatre shouldn't set what would be in the contra, but could provide a checklist of everything that would affect the deal.
- Some additions e.g. Wi-Fi, ticketing charges, etc. are now only there because deals have got so tight venues are making income around the margins. The squeeze has led to a proliferation of charges. If went to a straight 80-20 or 70-30 split this would be a shorter process.
- How can both venues and producers make money? Some terms create incentives for venues to make more money for the show. E.g. sharing marketing expense to grow audiences. This leads to more in demand and successful venues, more desired by producers. Discuss together how the deal can honour members and subscribers and audiences. When we succeed together, trust is built.
- We have become very adversarial – but we all want the best deal for that show. We need a longer term view.

- International dance companies tell venues what they're going to cost and issue a contract. Should producers think about it in more concrete terms?
- Chichester Festival Theatre has clean deal – 70/30 – no booking fee etc.
- A deal memo would give more clarity. Splits seem to be a sensible way to go. It gives both parties motivation to work harder at marketing from get go.
- Guarantees help venues to get more work. Transparency is needed – what work is costing to make it, what the producer needs, and how the venue is going to equally share the cost.
- It's because of relationships with venues with decent guarantees that shows can play large venues. Many organisations coming into midscale will outgrow their spaces. Be mindful of relationships with small midscale venues.
- It's ok to pay a good amount of money for good show – but not if a show is not worth it and has not had money spent on it – perhaps has been talked up by those booking. This doesn't help the audience or the venue.
- This is about establishing a fair balance of the risk.
- Changes to the way touring and venues are funded is having a dramatic affect. While venues don't move, they are places that have the relationship with the audiences. The touring mechanism is the way we reach the most audiences
- In some art forms and scales of art form, the money from venues does not cover costs.

#### Rachel Tackley's feedback to the full symposium:

- There is a perceived lack of trust between venues and producers (which is often mitigated by collaborations and co-productions where all info is shared).
- In response [League of Independent Producers \(LIP\)](#) have asked UK Theatre to consider a Heads of Terms deal memo to be agreed with all financial terms listed up front.
- UK Theatre is asked to move this forward and to consider if it is a code of conduct (which would develop the [Code of Practice for Venues and Producers](#), already in place) or a condition of membership.
- Arts Council England are keen to discuss, and are supportive of, better relationships between venues and producers.

# Discussion 5

## *What do we need to do to develop a new workforce for the future?*

Facilitator: Lisa Burger, Executive Director of the [National Theatre](#)

Comments from conversation starter Martin Sutherland, Chief Executive of [Royal and Derngate](#):

- The Royal and Derngate is setting up a free school. Working with a multi academy trust.
- As a practical answer to declining cultural provision in schools.
- There is a philosophical complexity for a theatre entering into this arrangement coupled with the excitement about developing the curriculum. What does that curriculum look like if the school is prioritising experimentation and innovation?
- A big topic as we as a country think about the skills needed for 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce - never mind the skills of the theatre workforce of the future.
- How can we support mid career and late career artists so they can move up and the people coming up can also move on?
- Apprenticeships and internships – accredited educational partners are vital! What can technical trade-bodies do to support the development of the arts curriculum?

Comments from conversation starter Prema Mehta, Lighting Designer:

- There are barriers to entry, be they from concerned parents ('But you don't know anyone in the industry') or literally not seeing someone else like you, and that brings a risk of us not attracting the best talent.
- Stage Sight is linking organisations to work out how they can support and develop people in off stage roles from diverse backgrounds.

- Are there barriers that people face from different cultural backgrounds? How do we reach out to people to tell them that theatres are a thing? Are our networks closed/ how do we reach out of our comfort zone?
- Training opportunities at work. Are there barriers as to who can access development training? Is there a risk that we offer different levels of opportunity for growth to different people?
- Do we have an unconscious bias as to who should make up these roles and what they would look like? What role do agents play in supporting emerging designers?

### Discussion:

- To what extent do we as leaders cause those barriers just through ignorance? We had a moment of self-reflection for everyone to consider that before we dived back in to the discussion.
  - Ask what personal barriers might you have?
  - Are we being too closed off with our networks? As a sector we can do more with individual actions to invite people into our world
- What could we do about barriers? Programming and specifically ensuring we are telling a range of stories quickly identified as a way of becoming more interesting to individuals from a broader range. Ramps on The Moon and Belgrade Coventry talked about their successes.
- Directly try and communicate with the young people in your area. What might stop them from wanting to engage in your organisation?
- There is a trend of fewer diverse young people having the resources to come into the industry.
- Can we help to address parental approval? There's something about knowing these roles exist and their perceptions of qualifications.
- There is a particular problem with attracting young people from a diverse background into technical disciplines within theatre and training them (e.g. as apprentices) once we've got them interested. There are issues with finding technical education providers to train apprentices. The National College for Creative Industries is working on this, with CC Skills and Creative Skillset.
- Action for everyone: identify potential consortium partners in your area. Work out ways of getting your training accredited.

- We need to raise awareness about opportunities in stage and technical management.
- The [Inspiring the Future of Theatre](#) campaign is already underway (led by SOLT and UK Theatre). There's also lots of awareness and resolve to address this problem from drama colleges to venues.
- Take individual action. We can all take the initiative and talk about the wonderful careers we work in, rethink who we invite as our guests to performances so they get the chance to meet our networks, or become a Councillor and School Governor to really fly the flag and speak directly to people who can take action.
- Reframe the problem: look for different pathways in. What about talking to the girl who does the sound for the Gospel group and seeing if she'd be interested in theatre? Talk more about the entrepreneurial possibilities for people within our industry. Try saying come and join my business rather than come and join my organisation.
- The way to develop the workforce of the future is to recruit fairly and pay properly.
- Finding different ways of generating funds is going to be a challenge for the next generation and being seen as a natural home for entrepreneurial talent is a solution.
- Developing the workforce themes came under 4 headings:
  - Influencing school curriculum
  - Breaking down barriers
  - Technical training
  - Taking personal responsibility for change

#### **Lisa Burger's feedback to the full symposium:**

- Share findings: Can UK Theatre help us to coordinate and list examples of good practice, groups working in this area, ideas underway and networks in one place? Have case studies about the process by which solutions have been found - share process and mistakes, not just the end result.
- We need to recruit and include diverse young people and ask those people for their voice and opinions. More focus on their contributions.
- Keep encouraging ourselves to be self aware!

# Discussion 6

## *Open Space/Talking Touring*

Facilitator: Jenifer Toksvig, Writer and Theatre Maker

Jenifer captured key points from a broad conversation about touring issues:

- The technical side should be involved earlier in the process in programming decisions. Decisions reach some departments after the fact, so their needs and contributions get factored in very late in the day. Consider the scale of the physical production at the point of designing and developing a production e.g.: tech facilities and challenges – it will make it easier and more cost effective to realise them.
- Production Managers can be brought on board late – resulting in trying to fit shows to touring venues that literally don't fit. Bridge the gap in the conversations between venues and producers and looking at the difference in tech specs.
- Create a production from the start that can tour efficiently AND still give you the initial concept.
- China Plate – who received funding from Arts Council England to talk about developmental process of moving small companies into mid-scale touring – confirmed this point came up quite a lot in conversations with venues.
- So much brilliant art is made and funded, there's a real responsibility to make it as widely available as possible. Funding should be given to companies to scale their shows. Scalable is possible!
- Can UK Theatre facilitate a technical directory to help this communication and to bring everyone together right at the start? Experienced tour managers might know this stuff, but it would be useful to collate this info somewhere. A call for publication with practical details of all venues (this currently exists [Performing Arts Yearbook](#)).
- Making non-theatre venues findable and sharable opens up employment.
- The [review of Touring Dance & Drama for Creative Scotland](#) noted a superficialness of conversations between producing company and theatre, and theatre and audience.

- Touring companies are becoming increasingly commoditised. This makes it harder to develop long-term relationships.
- Going into rural venues can break down those barriers. Getting to the heart of different vulnerabilities at play in rural areas.
- It comes down to why people tour work – everyone has different answers. Is it about getting the work of the organisation out to audience, or reaching particular audiences, or making money?
- The word 'entertain' can get lost sometimes.
- General sense among touring companies and receiving houses that touring is a bit broken. There is a terrible financial stress in the system, whereby margins are squeezed, venues cannot offer guarantees etc.
- Not just around money but there's a sense that in mid-scale, there's not enough quality of work out there for venues to book.
- Investment, or lack of, is a key issue. It discourages people from making work and taking risks.
- Arts Council England: challenged the concept that touring is broken. There are different solutions to how touring can take place. Once a month, £500,000 is given out in Project Grants for touring activity. National Activities is a separate national pot, funding touring outside of one area - 25%+ of funding.
- Companies feel that they have to tailor their budgets to meet requirements that they perceive the Arts Council as having.
- Just giving out money isn't enough, it needs to be strategic.
- Part of the problem is systemic, narrow-minded conversations. Part is resources. It requires commitment and resources.
- Venues have to programme so far in advance. They seem to do that earlier and earlier without communicating that to touring companies. Doesn't allow for anyone to be responsive to a successful production that might then go out on tour.
- When you can't send a script or give a huge amount of info so far in advance, very tricky, you end up getting a split week or a lesser guarantee.
- The timeline is really hard. Some people programme late, so unless you keep your own personal notes about who programmes when, and keep that info up to date, it's a constant battle. You rely on good relationships with individuals who then might leave the venue.

- Imbalance of power in the favour of the venues when they have touring funding, to get everything they possibly can out of any tour, to make the most of their resources.
- Arts Council are looking to make more information about Strategic Touring available, so people can plan better. Arts Council are collating all pro-formas from NPOs, annual surveys. They are asking organisations they're funding to tour (about 300 of them) to give them some idea of what they think they will do. This will help ACE get better picture of touring infrastructure and uses of funding, and thus where gaps might exist.
- New system; [the name of company was not captured] now working with four venues over a four year period, therefore a bit of flexibility. There is a commitment to co-pro work. They have settled on some work - but all is new work and new commissions, so there is built-in flexibility. Allows for work to be more responsive. Only having four venues also gives ability to bring on new partners over those four years. A skeleton for the company.
- Now every NPO has to have a digital strategy, pressure to make this more creative in nature. Whilst this expectation is being made, how do these orgs learn best practice? Particularly between larger and smaller scale orgs.
- UK Theatre could be a fantastic way to connect companies up who are interested in exploring and developing this work. How do you start those conversations?

#### **Jenifer Toksvig's feedback to the full symposium:**

- A venue directory including tech specs, audience demographics and realistic sales expectations, for tour bookers to use ([Performing Arts Yearbook](#)).
- More transparent communication, internally amongst departments when planning shows. Including with funding bodies.
- It's easy for me: connecting up people who have certain skills and knowledge, with people who don't. For people who find something hard, connecting them with people who find it easy.

# Summary of actions

As a result of the discussions at the Theatre and Touring Symposium, UK Theatre, working with the Society of London Theatre, has committed to exploring the following areas in 2018/19.

## *Research*

[UK Theatre's 2016 joint report](#) with Arts Council England explored whether great theatre experienced online can lead people to the live experience, or are we encouraging a preference for the digital experience above the live experience?

UK Theatre will work with others, including Arts Council England and The Space, to build on existing research in this area, to determine what further research is needed to update our understanding of this important issue.

We will also work with these partners to consider what more can be done to support the sector to use digital technologies in their business models and to stay relevant to audiences.

The link between pricing, accessibility and audience diversity was made during the Symposium. UK Theatre will work with The Audience Agency to explore how theatre sales data and audience information can help us to improve in this area.

## *Venues, producers and the touring model*

UK Theatre and SOLT will facilitate conversations to lead to the publication of guidance and resources for all in the sector to use. More information about that work can be found on the [UK Theatre website, here](#).

## *Sharing information/learning and facilitate collaborations*

Many of the discussions at the Theatre and Touring Symposium called for greater sharing of knowledge and facilitation of collaborations. UK Theatre will explore solutions to achieve this, for example a searchable database of case studies with contact details.

## *Workplace development and diversity*

Following the publication of the UK Theatre and SOLT [Theatre Workforce Review in 2017](#), UK Theatre and SOLT have been taking forward [a strategy](#) whose long term aim is to bring more diversity to the sector and change the working culture of theatre. This work will continue throughout 2018/19 and progress will be shared with the sector.