



# Introduction

Why is touring essential? The simplest answer is that it's an economic imperative for many professional performing artists. From the times of touring players, the arts have required a level of specialisation that is often beyond the economic ability of one community to support. Troubadours and players moved from town to town in search of sufficient income to sustain them.

Touring sustains the economic life of a work beyond its initial season, providing the possibility of greater financial security for both performers and venues. For performers, it builds expertise among practitioners. Through exposure to new ideas and experiences, artists have the opportunity to both define and refine the practice of their chosen art form. It provides access to new audiences, who in turn provide responses that inform and develop the work being presented. Performing a work across an extended period of time enables the work to grow and develop – a development often lamented by critics, writers and performers as unattainable in a one-off performance season.

The generic responses of American performers to the question of 'Why tour?' are summed up in *An American Dialogue* by Rebecca Lewis, who writes that it was as if they'd been asked why they breathed. 'In order to live, in order to work, in order to see one's work performed, to work out ideas, to season work, for the magic of communication with an audience, and as an impetus for the creation of new work'.<sup>1</sup>

For audiences and the communities they live in, the answer to the question 'Why tour?' revolves around issues of accessibility and cultural diversity. Access to a broad spectrum of touring artists and companies enriches people's cultural lives through performances of established classics and new works. Local performers, both amateur and professional, benefit from access to their colleagues through dialogue and the exchange of ideas.

This is captured in a visionary statement from the 1989 *National Task Force on Presenting and Touring the Performing Arts*: 'In a period of great demographic and cultural flux, it is even more essential that audiences and communities have access to the finest, most varied arts experiences, and that artists reach the broadest public in turn. The fullest development of our society is served if we use presenting and touring both to respond to change and be agents of it'.<sup>2</sup>

1. *An American Dialogue: The National Task Force on Presenting and Touring the Performing Arts*, 1989. The Association of Performing Arts Presenters, p22  
2. *An American Dialogue*, *ibid.*, p7

This is borne out by the positive reception to a host of New Zealand works performed overseas.

If your long-term aim is to take your work offshore and develop a market overseas, the discipline of touring within New Zealand will serve to test and benchmark the work. As a general rule of thumb, most internationally successful shows have had extensive domestic touring experience before venturing offshore.