



Selling your work: festivals, venue sales, co-productions and schools

Primarily this touring manual is focused on self-presenting. However, there are a number of options available in terms of selling your work. Following a slow demise in the 80s regional festivals began to spring up again (nothing is ever new) in the early 1990s. Mid-way through that decade, venues for hire began to show an increasing interest in tours of New Zealand works. Certain New Zealand producing venues have always had an interest in purchasing product. And last, but not least, schools performances are an area of both specialist touring and as inclusions in more general tours.

Festivals

Selling your work to festivals is a great means of ensuring exposure, developing your brand and guaranteeing financial security. Unfortunately festivals in this country don't conveniently sit together in a calendar year. They are dotted throughout and across years (some are annual, some biennial). However, they can be included within an otherwise self-presenting tour, providing some measure of financial security, marketing support and access to audiences.

How do you let festivals know of your work?

You can contact them individually – and it's a good idea to do this early on in your first production, if possible, so they can have the opportunity to see the work on stage. We deal in a live medium and it's best to see the work live. As many of you may know, theatre and dance do not translate well to video. Do offer them comps and promptly provide them with any information they require.

You can also join PANNZ (Performing Arts Network New Zealand. Refer to Service organisations, page 223, for contact details). PANNZ holds an annual market usually during a major arts festival. This brings together producers, venues and Festivals. What you get in return for joining is the opportunity to apply to present your work at the annual market. If you are successful in your application then you are able to present your show: to talk for a set period of time about the works you have on offer and show video or dvd material. The PANNZ co-ordinator

compiles a booklet for all attendees that lists the details of the shows in what are known as 'one-pagers' (this gives you an indication of their length) and provides brief overviews of each show. An example is included (refer Appendix 6, page 213). Booths are also provided for displays and as a face-to-face meeting point during the market.

If festivals are unable to attend your show or the PANNZ market, then you can send them a pack. This should include:

- your one-pager
- a full set of reviews (attributed and dated).

And can also include:

- video or DVD
- script (if it's a theatre work)
- CD (if it's a musical work)
- a full set of technical requirements.

Festival directors are very used to watching videos of stage shows – go for the best quality you can achieve within your budget. You could begin the video with a 10-minute edit showing highlights of the work, but what directors want to see is the whole work, warts and all, particularly if it's dance. If you start editing it then the first question asked is 'What's been left out and why?' So, a wide shot of the stage (you can zoom in and out where appropriate) with no edits is ideal. You may want to video a performance without an audience so you can lift the lights. Theatre lighting tends to be a little dim for video purposes and dark videos that risk the festival director's eyesight are not popular.

So, there's a level of interest – where do you go from here? The negotiating table is the answer to this. In the first instance, what festivals will be looking for is a:

- per show price *and* a weekly price
- clear understanding of what is technically required to mount the show.

How do you work out your show price?

This is slightly tricky in that, as well as ensuring your costs are met, it also involves an understanding of the market value of your work. A show with well-known actors that has had one or two previous successful seasons is probably worth more than a show with an

untried cast and only one successful season. The only way to find out where current values sit is to talk to other producers.

It's relatively easy to work out your show price – simply budget the cost of delivering one show (excluding per diems, transport, accommodation and royalties which are negotiated separately to the fee). Your fee will cover the wages and any remount costs involved. It may also include a profit margin for your company. If a festival wants more than one show (and this is likely) then the price can be adjusted accordingly. Standard practice is for the price to stay at the per show price for up to three shows (multiplied by three of course) and thereafter to be discounted accordingly.

Per diems

Festivals tend to have standard per diem rates and these vary from festival to festival – you need to identify your acceptable minimum per diem.

Accommodation

It's also up to you to specify your accommodation requirements. Be prepared for festivals to negotiate. They often have accommodation sponsors which can limit your negotiations.

What you need to decide is:

- Will the company share rooms?
- Is the company prepared to be split (if you are a large company you may find you're booked into two separate places – will this work for you)?
- Is someone prepared to sleep in the lounge (not ideal and needs to be specified as such)?
- Do you require self-catering accommodation?
- Are there baths (important for dancers)?
- How far is the accommodation from the venue? If it's more than 10 minutes' walk, is transport provided by the festival?

Transport

Regarding transport, festivals usually provide transport to and from the town they're located within, but transport between your accommodation and the venue is usually your responsibility (hence the distance question). If you are more than 10 minutes' walk away from

the venue, then you should factor transport costs between the venue and your accommodation into your negotiations.

If you're on a larger tour then your transport costs can be amortised. This simply means sharing the costs of the whole transport bill between each tour venue. Festivals generally welcome amortisation, but you may run into problems if the festival has a preferred transport operator (an airline sponsor for example).

This brings up the question of how you will transport yourselves. If you're touring within a relatively contained geographical area you may choose to drive and amortise the car hire costs. However, flying may be the only option. In this instance, it's part of the negotiation process as to who books the fares. It may work better for you to do this and then invoice the festival with an agreed price, or they may prefer to do it (particularly if they have a sponsorship arrangement in place). If the festival is responsible for this, be *very clear* about when you need to travel. The festival may have an arrangement with an airline company that requires them to fly at off-peak hours. Your company may not be happy at having to get up at 5am to catch a 6.30am flight from Auckland to Christchurch when they don't start pack-in until 6pm that night. The way to avoid this is to request that bookings are sent through to you for checking before being confirmed.

Royalties

As usual, royalties come off the gross and relate to the agreements you have with the creators of your show. For example, you may have to cover royalties for the writer and the set and lighting designers. If your work was originally specifically commissioned for performance, the commissioner (usually a festival or a producing venue) may require a royalty. Royalties are a non-negotiable part of the sales deal. At the end of your performances you should expect to receive a full box office report and the royalty. Always check this carefully and be certain about who is paying what to whom and when.

You may find that the festival wants to restrict your performances in regions close to its own (to avoid losing some of its potential market). If you are including a festival within a larger tour check the towns closest to the festival town with the festival as a matter of courtesy. You may also find that the festival restricts your perform-

ances for a period of time following the festival, or asks for a first right of refusal on producing any future performances in their own region. All this is negotiable.

Make sure that every agreement you reach is specified within the contract. Ask for a draft contract and read it carefully – once it's signed there's no going back. Carry a copy of the contract on tour with you for reference in the event of a dispute (make sure there's a disputes resolution clause within the contract).

Marketing

Festivals usually have a marketing department. If it's a small festival this may consist of just one person, but if it's large you may find yourself dealing with three or four people (the programme publisher, the publicist or two publicists, etc.). Festival staff also start work at different times so there may be one initial contact followed by a handover to another or several others. It can become very confusing, so keep clear records of who is who and who asks you for what. Very large festivals tend to appoint one person for you to deal with in regard to every issue. This is a rare but enjoyable occurrence.

It's best to develop your marketing pack and send it off in one form. CD ROMs are ideal for this purpose.

The marketing pack should include:

- all reviews
- the poster/flier image (in an electronically usable form and in its components rather than a locked whole, so that another designer can manipulate the elements)
- the wording to be used in brochures, on fliers and posters – and in varying forms – say 10 words, 50 words and 100 words. And the title if it's designed as a logo
- a set of photographs: colour and black and white (and in electronically usable form)
- a full set of programme information, including bios and photographs (in electronically usable form)
- all mandatory credits (logos, the title of the show and author, cast and crew, etc.). These will usually be part of the negotiating process, especially if you are doing a larger tour with sponsors attached. This can be a problem for festivals as they usually

source their own sponsors. Therefore, you may find your sponsors will miss out on a festival season within the tour. Keep this in mind within your sponsorship proposals

- broadcast quality footage.

Festivals are very busy places and things can only too easily fall through the cracks, so ensure that your contracts include a clause that you sign off all marketing materials before they go to print or broadcast. Otherwise, you may find that a key sponsor or credit is left off and you will then have to bear the responsibility for this (and it could result in a reduction of your sponsorship fee or a very disgruntled member of your creative team).

While festivals have their own branding, which is the reason for supplying your marketing material as building blocks for them to use (rather than specifying particular fonts, etc.), don't forget that your branding is also important. You don't want your product to look shabby in any way.

Interviews

It's usually best if all interview requests come through you, or your publicist. You will know your company's timetable best and can slot interviews in at appropriate times. If you're doing a national tour then you may want to restrict the festival to local publicity only and reserve the nationwide mediums for your own publicist (if the nationwide publication only mentions New Plymouth and not the other seven centres your marketing campaign will be detrimentally affected). Always alert the festival to any local angle and ensure it receives reviews from tour performances prior to your performance at its festival.

Technical information

It's really important to supply as much information as you can (probably on the same CD ROM as the marketing pack). Likewise, it's important to receive as much information as possible about the venue you're playing in. Put your head technician in touch with their head technician.

Your pack-in period may be very tight indeed, as festivals like to close one show one night and open another on the next. If this is the

case, you may find your pack-in period begins at midnight. Ensure your head tech has asked for as many crew as required. This is one thing festivals are often good at – providing a large, experienced crew. However, it behoves you to be as well prepared as they are.

When you get there

Do make yourself known to the festival staff. Pop into the office, but expect it to be very busy and try not to get in the way (a phone call first is a good idea). Festivals usually prepare a pack for all your company members, which will include all sorts of useful information about the Festival and the town you're visiting. Often festivals will have a discount card for your company so they can receive discounted prices on tickets to other shows. They may have gym or massage deals. There may be a festival club, which is a great place to meet other artists and festival staff and to have a drink after your performance.

Festivals are usually a lot of fun, but do provide opportunities for late nights and parties, so keep an eye on your company if you're in the middle of a busy tour. You don't want to compromise the next tour venue.

Venue purchases

A lot of the festival information applies to this section, but there are minor differences.

Some venues do purchase shows. The method of working out your show fee is exactly the same as for festivals – the show price and then per diems, royalties, accommodation and transport on top. The main point of difference is that venues are more open to variances in negotiations regarding show price. They might, for example, suggest a lower price matched with a percentage share of box office. If you are confident about your product then this may be a good option to take.

As with festivals, purchasing venues may also want to place protective restrictions around your schedule (such as no performances within a set geographical definition before and after your performances in their town) and may request a first option for any

planned future performances (this is usually restricted to a specific period of time).

In terms of contracts, the marketing and technical sides of your show follow the same advice as given for festivals.

Co-productions/joint ventures

Co-productions or joint ventures are behind the founding of the PANNZ market. They're essentially a way to spread the financial risks of touring between two or more stakeholders, usually your company and the venue. They require a great deal of trust and a very specific attention to detail from all the members of the co-production.

Co-pros or JVs can take many different forms. Usually each party takes risks within their own areas of expertise. A venue, for example, might agree to contribute the venue hire costs, house technical staff, equipment and local marketing. The company might agree to cover delivery costs including per diems, accommodation and transport.

The easiest method to construct a co-pro or JV is to strike a joint budget showing all the costs involved in mounting a performance in that particular venue. If you're on a larger tour then you will probably want to work in some amortised costs. Costs can be amortised in transport (as already discussed), remount costs (such as the costs of re-building the set or re-rehearsal) and some areas of marketing (one large poster/flier print run is probably going to be cheaper than six separate runs for each tour venue). Once you have a mutually agreed budget you can then look at what each party is able to offer to the co-production.

In the easiest deals each party would contribute an equivalent amount and the income would be divided on a 50:50 ratio. Don't forget there are some costs which must come off the income before it can be shared out, such as royalties, ticket costs, etc. It's best to work off a projected net figure – in any instance, GST should be left out of all calculations until the final calculation.

However, it doesn't often work out that each party is contributing an equivalent amount, so negotiation will be required. It is, in all of

this, incumbent on each party to have truthfully represented his/her costs.

Negotiation may result in a differentiated share of the potential income. You may agree a set of fixed costs on both sides that get paid out dollar for dollar until breakeven is reached. On reaching breakeven the profit is then shared in a way that reflects both sides' risk: 60:40, 70:30, 20:80, whatever reflects the risk. Or you may agree to a straight split where each party takes a fixed percentage and no fixed costs are met before this division.

Whatever agreements you reach, ensure it is clearly laid out in a written contract binding on all parties. You're risking losing more than just money here – you're risking goodwill and future tours by either yourselves, or other groups, to this venue. This contract must include a disputes resolution clause.

The value of co-production/joint venture deals to the touring producer is that the risk is shared. The other parties are not only relieving you of some of the burden, but they're also, by implication, taking a greater ownership of your show. After all, if they don't fulfil their obligations then they will be jeopardising their own outcomes – and vice versa. It also ensures that you have local knowledge well on your side, relieving you of a great deal of potential research. And it encourages the venues to develop relationships with local providers, building their own community networks and databases, which are of lasting value to them in terms of securing their own future.

Schools

Touring to schools can be approached in one of two ways. You can either include school shows within your touring schedule, so they come to the theatre to see you perform, or you can take your show directly into schools. If you are contemplating this, a good resource is the Ministry of Education publication *The Arts in the New Zealand Curriculum*. You can locate this and other information through their website: www.minedu.govt.nz. Refer the Literature review, page 217, for further details. Another website which is of use is: www.tki.org.nz/r/arts/curriculum. This website will allow you to find

out about the five national co-ordinators currently employed by the Ministry of Education to assist with delivering the arts curriculum into schools. The five cover: music, visual arts, dance, nga toi, the Māori-medium arts curriculum and drama.

Either way, there are some key things to remember when dealing with schools:

- They require a good deal of advance warning that your show is either coming to a theatre in town or is touring to schools in their area. The more warning you give, the more likely you are to attract bookings (this is usually a *minimum* of one school term prior to the term within which you're planning to be on the road).
- Teachers are only available at set times. The best times to talk with them are at lunchtimes and after school, so structure your working timetable around these hours when preparing a school tour.
- Your show is more likely to be viewed with favour if it fits an aspect of the curriculum. Check the curriculum through the Ministry of Education, as it can, for example, tell you which of Shakespeare's plays are included for study within the curriculum in that year (www.minedu.govt.nz).
- Your show is even more likely to be favoured if it comes with teaching resources, so that teachers can prepare a unit (which fits the curriculum) around your visit to their town. There are several organisations who can help (at a cost) with preparing materials. Again, check with the Ministry.

Schools deal with paying for shows in different ways. Some set aside an amount of money for shows at the beginning of each year – once it's gone, it's gone. Some collect cash from the children. They may run it through their books and hand you a convenient cheque, or they may trickle a bunch of notes and coins into your hand at the end of the show. Count it.

If you agree to a per head cost, rather than a fixed cost, then remember that children get sick and engage in many different activities. For example, you may find that when you book the show you're promised 200 children, but only 120 are there when you arrive. This could be because Form 4 is on a sports visit, which was planned in the

intervening time, and there's a flu epidemic in the district. The only way to safeguard against this is to require a minimum payment. It's also wise to have one of your team do a rough headcount – just to check.

If you're bringing students into theatres you may wish to have a different policy. 'No shows' are seats that could have been sold – you may wish to charge for the number of seats booked in the first instance. You may also contemplate charges for cancellations or changes in audience numbers close to performance dates. If so, let the schools know of these charges from the beginning of your communication with them (you may find that this alone is enough to deter them from cancelling at the last minute).

You may find that lower decile schools request discounts on your price. It's up to you as to how you deal with this. Be aware though that lower decile schools do have access to additional funds to ensure their children are able to access the same activities as a higher decile school.

Schools vary greatly in size. One means of ensuring smaller schools don't miss out altogether is to suggest that they band together or join in with a larger school in the district. Teachers in smaller schools are often wise to this already.

Performing in schools

There's an art to this:

- Which age group is your show suitable for?
- Can you do two shows in one day, or even three (some schools may require three shows because their performance space only holds a third of the school at a time)?
- What is your set-up time like?
- Do you require a blackout (many schools' performance spaces cannot achieve this during the day)?
- Do you have resource materials?
- What aspects of learning will it be useful for? How will teachers be able to encourage learning from it, prior and after?

Booking the tour is a challenge in itself. The Ministry of Education has a list of all the registered schools in the country with their contact details that can be downloaded free from their website

(www.minedu.govt.nz). They keep it up to date and more small schools come into existence and then disappear than you might think.

Sit down with your map and divide the country into regions. A look at the schools list will tell you how many schools there are in that region and enable you to work out rough lengths for the duration of your time in each area.

Then send out your material. Do give a deadline for replies and include a booking form that can be faxed or filled in and posted back. Directing them to a website where they can fill in a booking form and submit it may work for secondary schools but possibly not for intermediates and primary schools that are not as well supplied with technology. Whereas most theatre tours can be organised through e-mail, a combination of post, fax and e-mail is more common within schools, with the emphasis firmly on faxes.

As the replies come in, compile them into their geographical area. Then the fun bit starts. Once you reach the deadline, sit down with a large map of the country. You're about to attempt to put together a tour that has reasonable driving distances between regions and schools. It will take a bit of time. On your booking form you will have asked the schools for their preferred dates and times, but you will have asked them for options and you won't have promised them that they will necessarily get their first choice.

Once you have something approximating a tour, you need to send the dates and times back to the schools for confirmation. This requires a lot of to-ing and fro-ing, so allow enough time for this.

Once the tour is confirmed send out the resources so the teachers have enough time to construct a teaching unit. Always contact the schools the week before the planned performance to remind and confirm, especially if the time between the booking being made and fulfilled is lengthy. School diaries are busy and things change. More than one touring group has turned up to find no-one at the schools because a sports day has been re-scheduled, or the teacher who organised the performance is sick and no-one else remembered you were coming.

It's also wise to remember that schools will provide very different spaces for your performance. How flexible is your show in terms of packing in and out – obviously the more flexible you are the

more schools you will be able to play. Be very clear with schools about what you require from the performance space. If, for example, your show requires a blackout, can this be achieved?

On the day of performance ensure you have someone from the school to meet you, who has the keys to unlock the performance space and can assist you to pack-in. Allow yourself enough time to resolve any problems that may arise (for example, the hall has been cleared for sports and chairs need to be unpacked and set up).

If you're paid in cash then do count it before you leave the school. If you're on a tour then the last thing you want to have to do is chase previous schools for missing amounts. Likewise check the cheque!

And finally, send a thank-you letter at the end of the tour. This, in itself, can be a useful marketing tool for your next schools tour (you may find you receive piles of thank-you letters from the students – always useful material for funding or sponsorship applications).

It's always worth your while to evaluate how the tour went – preferably with the touring team – as an investment in lessons for any future tours. You may find it useful to send the schools a brief questionnaire (keep it to one page, teachers are busy people) seeking their feedback. In fact you may like to take these on tour with you, hand it to the teacher at the beginning of the day and collect it at the end. That way you'll save them time and ensure you have a full representation of views.

Rewarding moments My personal favourite was at a school where the 'bad' kid (of the expelled variety) was made to help us pack in and out as a punishment for some piece of unacceptable behaviour. He was fairly silent packing in – but he watched the performance pretty intently. At the end when he was helping us pack out he muttered, 'So howja get to join Strike?' I explained that I'd gone to Massey, studied music, etc, etc. He was silent for a bit longer and then he said, 'Yeah, I'm gonna do that.'

Murray Hickman, founding member, Strike Percussion.