

REPORT

A FUTURE FOR
ARTS TOURING
IN IRELAND
2010-2015

THE TOURING EXPERIMENT SEPTEMBER 2008

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1. Introduction

“Your audience gives you everything you need. They tell you. There is no director who can direct you like an audience.”

Fanny Brice (Comedienne, Singer & Actor 1891-1951)

The Touring Experiment (TTE) is a research project which was initiated by the Arts Council in 2006. The project is the first of its kind in Ireland, and our purpose was to gather quality information about touring the arts in this country. The finished project is an unprecedented body of work which, we hope, will inform the strategic development of touring the arts into the future. In our recommendations, we have positioned the Arts Council as the most appropriate agency to deliver that development.

The Touring Experiment is an ‘action research’ project. Action research involves practitioners as participants in the process and as researchers and contributors in their own right. *The Touring Experiment* included the direct involvement of multiple touring practitioners; 49 tours across six artforms plus one project which researched the impact of increased public relations and technical expertise on touring productions.

During our research, it became clear that the single biggest shift of perception we need to make is how we approach our audiences. Little, if any, touring activity in the arts is undertaken with an ‘audience centred’ approach. There has never been a single clear, national statement of policy goals or objectives for funding touring activity. The current ad hoc approach to tour development has therefore become dated, and it is the only one we have.

Out of habit or necessity, it has become rooted in the operational environment of the 1980s and 1990s. This policy merely requires that there is enough product to supply the network of professionally managed venues, and that production companies are able to deliver that product. It ensures volume without worrying too much if it will ever be consumed.

Meanwhile, audiences have developed, diversified, and moved on. Their tastes and preferences have broadened. In an age of burgeoning information technology and niche interests, audiences know that there are other forms of entertainment and cultural activity that actively engage them in dialogue.

While some touring organisations have found favour with audiences that are growing in sophistication and curiosity, much arts touring activity still takes a ‘suck it and see’ approach. In short, the lack of dialogue between touring organisations and their audiences means that the relationship is not developing. If it cannot develop, it will struggle to survive.

In the context of *The Touring Experiment*, participating organisations did not actively view or use the available research funding exclusively to support a

research project. Instead, it was generally viewed as yet another source of grant aid. This is not unusual, as most arts organisations seek to optimise all available funding to support their production activity. But there is clear evidence that this way of thinking reinforces an approach to artistic programming, financial planning and marketing that takes little or no account of audiences. The true cost of grant reactive behaviour is inhibited ambition, and it is a deeply embedded feature of touring organisations and venues.

As part of the preparation for this project, we examined the Arts Council's Annual Reports¹ over a 30 year period. We looked at Arts Council touring policies, its decisions on expenditure, and reviewed the historical patterns of touring behaviour in all the artforms. Our research into touring looks at Dance, Literature, Music, Theatre, Traditional Arts, Visual Arts (including Architecture).

The main finding of the review is that touring has been a recurring challenge for successive Arts Councils. There are three underlying, and inherently conflicting, tensions that are constant throughout the period:

1. Strategies that were designed to boost levels of touring activity, so that audiences could access a greater spread of high quality work around the country, conflicted with other funding strategies;
2. The need to support local indigenous art set against the need to support national and recognisable touring brands;
3. The conflicting attractions of grant related schemes designed to encourage risk taking, and those that are designed to compensate for the exposure to risk.

While each of these factors is explored in more detail in this Report, together they illustrate the need for a new approach;

1. To place the audience at the centre of the tour planning process; *The Touring Experiment* proposes that the audience should be at the centre of planning and implementation over the next six years (2009 - 2014);
2. To determine and agree the strategic purpose of touring, in order to enable the Arts Council play the lead strategic role in reforming the environment for touring.

This approach would allow the Council to take an holistic view of the development of touring policy, so that the national and the local are complementary features of the touring environment. It would also develop the Council's familiarity and experience of touring productions and exhibitions; increase the number of people who attend touring productions, events and exhibitions; and facilitate artform-led initiatives and innovations.

1 See Appendix I - A Review of Touring Policy from 1970s to 2000. This work was supported by various interviews, a review of academic publications and Arts Council archival material.

In addition, by developing a new approach to touring, the Arts Council would be able to develop a system of funding that places audience development at its core, and reduce the prevalence of 'grant-reactive' behaviour.

The evidence of *The Touring Experiment* indicates that an audience centred strategy will increase the levels of audience engagement and audience attendances. It is also very clear that any audience-led approach to touring has to be motivated by the intention to promote and develop public appreciation of the arts. The bigger challenge is to achieve this while curbing any tendency towards conservatism in audience-driven programming.

The Touring Experiment recommendations (see pages 30 to 41 of this report) describe leadership, policy and practical interventions that the Arts Council needs to consider. These include issues of strategic positioning, influence and cooperation; reforming and refining Arts Council policy and funding systems.

Above all, these recommendations specify that the imperative for funding touring activity must be driven by the concept of serving and supporting the audience. By placing the audience as the primary strategic focus, and using that focus to develop a cohesive touring strategy, the findings of this research point to a robust future for touring the arts in Ireland.

September 2008

2. The Touring Experiment Project Team

This project was managed by a consortium that comprised Irish Theatre Institute and Temple Bar Cultural Trust working with a professional researcher. The consortium engaged specialist advisers and consultants to work on specific aspects of the research, for example on specific artforms, audience perspectives and case studies.

Temple Bar Cultural Trust

Dermot McLaughlin (CEO)
Alastar MacAongusa (Project Manager)
Eimear Chaomhánach (Executive Assistant)

Irish Theatre Institute

Siobhan Bourke (Co-Director)
Jane Daly (Co-Director)

Research Consultant:

Belinda Moller

Specialists:

Dance - Siobhan Bourke and Jane Daly (Round 1), Catherine Nunes (Round 2), and Paul Johnson (Round 3)
Literature - Pat Cotter
Music - Imelda Dervin and Margaret O'Sullivan
Traditional Arts - Dermot McLaughlin
Theatre - Siobhan Bourke and Jane Daly,
Visual Arts (including Architecture) - Catherine Marshall.

Audience Research Consultants:

Public Communications Centre Ltd.

Case Study Consultants:

Dance - Deirdre Mulrooney
Music - Imelda Dervin
Theatre - Phelim Donlon
Visual Arts - Catherine Marshall

The total budget provided by the Arts Council for *The Touring Experiment* was €2,561,770 which was applied to twenty months of action research that took place from November 2006 to July 2008. This meant distributing €2,126,771 to 50 producers with individual funding allocations ranging from €2,500 (architecture) to €173,000 (theatre).

3. Objectives of The Touring Experiment

The key objectives over the two years of the project were to:

1. Manage and assess the touring submissions in all six artforms;
2. Develop and provide a representative and appropriate sample of tours in order to extract data and develop strategic policy;
3. Present an interpretation of audience behaviour and attitudes in relation to national touring;
4. Assemble, analyse and interpret data on the costs, logistics and audience attendance of national touring in all artforms;
5. Describe the organising structures used in touring;
6. Provide practical insights into all issues of touring, both general and artform-specific;
7. Taking into account the needs of producers, presenters and audiences, deliver strategic policy recommendations for touring (both general and artform-specific);
8. Taking into account the needs of producers, presenters and audiences, deliver strategic policy recommendations for effective deployment of resources.

4. Methodologies

The Arts Council developed *The Touring Experiment* as an action research project in the summer of 2006. The project was designed as a mechanism for developing a cogent and evidence-based national touring policy.

The first round of the project was originally designed as a response to the needs of Theatre and Dance tours only. Music and Visual Arts were planned for Round 2. Literature and Traditional Arts were added to the brief after Round 1. Architecture was introduced in Round 3 under Visual Arts.

Therefore, specialists for six artforms were required. Some of the specialists worked in teams, and at certain times, the core group of six became a much larger group of 11 people. For practical reasons, the core group had responsibility for determining the generic recommendations that emerged from the artform analyses and other relevant data.

The Touring Experiment is a complex project because:

- Action research assumes the direct involvement of multiple touring practitioners with a direct interest in touring;
- It collected and analysed data from touring in six different artforms;
- The range of artforms and chosen methodologies required assessment of a wide range of touring proposals;
- It ensured that accurate, usable data was collected as part of the process, and developed recommendations and practical interventions as a part of a wider strategy for touring.

4.1 The Tours

All tour expenditure was decided by the Arts Council based on recommendations made by *The Touring Experiment* and with input from specialist Arts Council executive staff. The tours all took place within a twelve-month period from April 2007 to April 2008. The entire action research project from inception to conclusion spanned a 20-month period from November 2006 to July 2008.

Three rounds of assessments² took place:

Round 1: Dance and Theatre (November 2006 - January 2007);

Round 2: Dance, Literature, Music, Theatre, Traditional Arts and Visual Arts (February - April 2007);

Round 3: Dance, Literature, Music, Traditional Arts and Visual Arts (including Architecture) (May - July 2007).

2 For a detailed description of the assessment rounds see Appendix II - The Touring Experiment Interim Report November 2007 (in particular section 2 of the Interim Report).

Each round comprised an assessment of expressions of interest, followed by assessment of a detailed proposal from each producer invited to take part. Each detailed tour proposal was assessed in light of the criteria used to develop an appropriate artform sample within the available budget. The overall sample of tours was based on satisfying a range of criteria as follows:

- Artistically-led tours;
- Audience-led tours;
- Tours defined by producers as micro/small, medium or large;
- Geographically spread tours;
- Tours that indicated an element of innovation in organising, managing, and presenting.

The tables below describe each tour Producer by artform, and the total amount of money provided by *The Touring Experiment*. The individual tour grants have not been published to maintain the principle of non-attribution.

4.1.1 The Touring Experiment Tours by Artform

| Artform | Producer | Tour Title | Tour dates | No of Venues | Number of performances |
|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Dance | Echo Echo Dance Theatre Company | Consequences | 13 Nov - 18 Dec 2007 | 12 | 14 |
| Dance | Ciotóg | How did we get here...? | 18 Sept - 6 Oct 2007 | 6 | 9 |
| Dance | Irish Modern Dance Theatre | RrrrKillKillKill...to infinity | 6 Nov - 24 Nov 2007 | 7 | 7 |
| Dance | Dance Theatre of Ireland | SLOW DOWN | 7 Nov - 28 Nov 2007 | 7 | 11 |
| | | | | Total TTE Funding Dance: | €138,863 |

| Artform | Producer | Tour Title | Tour dates | No of Venues | Number of events |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Literature | CLÉ | Author and Editor Library Tour | 27 Jul - 11 Dec 2007 | 17 Libraries | 35 |
| Literature | Tigh Filí / Eurochild | Bring The Moon | 14 Nov - 7 Dec 2007 | 5 | 5 |
| Literature | Children's Books Ireland | Children's Book Festival Author Tours | 8 Oct - 25 Oct 2007 | 28 | 28 |
| Literature | Kids' Own Publishing | Access All Areas | 9 Oct - 26 Oct 2007 | 8 | 22 |
| Literature | Western Writers' Centre | Irish Language Writers - Beyond Limits | 27 Oct - 2 Dec 2007 | 5 | 7 |
| Literature | Nuala Ní Chonchúir | Tatoo: Tatú - Bilingual Poetry | 15 Sept - 9 Nov 2007 | 5 | 5 |
| Literature | Sliabh an Fhiolair Teo/ Brandon Books | Brandon 25 | 27 Sept - 15 Nov 2007 | 5 | 7 |
| | | | | Total TTE Funding Literature: | €124,432 |

| Artform | Producer | Tour Title | Tour dates | Venues | Number of performances |
|----------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Music | Classicallinks | Church Classics | 2 Aug - 9 Dec 2007 | 6 | 30 |
| Music | London Irish Camerata | London Irish Camerata Winter Tour | 5 - 9 Dec 2007 | 4 | 4 |
| Music | Ulster Orchestra | Mozart's Clarinet Concerto | 17 - 24 Oct 2007 | 3 | 3 |
| Music | Improvised Music Company | Tomasz Stanko Boban Marković | 18 - 23 Sept 2007 5 - 9 Dec 2007 | 5 5 | 5 5 |
| Music | Armoniosa | For Several Friends | 28 Sept - 28 Oct 2007 | 6 | 6 |
| Music | Crash Ensemble | Strange Folk! | 31 Aug - 23 Nov 2007 | 4 | 4 |
| Music | Zoid Ensemble | The Zoid Ensemble's Autumn Tour | Nov 30 - Dec 19 2007 | 6 | 6 |
| Music | Model Art & Niland Gallery | A Month of Sundays | 4 - 25 Nov 2007 | 4 | 4 |
| | | | | Total TTE Funding Music: | €280,681 |

| Artform | Producer | Tour Title | Tour dates | Venues | Number of performances |
|----------------|-------------------------|--|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Theatre | Landmark Productions | Underneath the Lintel | 24 May - 21 Jun 2007 | 8 | 19 |
| Theatre | NOMAD | Conversations on a Homecoming | 22 Oct - 24 Nov 2007 | 8 | 23 |
| Theatre | Druid | My Brilliant Divorce | 12 Nov - 1 Dec 2007 | 7 | 20 |
| Theatre | City Theatre Dublin | Analysis of impact of additional Marketing and Technical resources | 2007/2008 | n/a | n/a |
| Theatre | Civic Theatre | Trousers | 26 Feb - 31 Mar 2007 | 9 | 48 |
| Theatre | NASC | The Taming of the Shrew | 21 Jan - 24 Feb 2008 | 7 | 27 |
| Theatre | Upstate Theatre | At Peace | 18 Sept - 3 Nov 2007 | 11 | 23 |
| Theatre | Blood in the Alley | Smallone | 8 - 28 May 2007 | 10 | 14 |
| Theatre | Yew Theatre Productions | Fr. Mathew | 30 Aug - 6 Oct 2007 | 12 | 25 |
| Theatre | Second Age | Philadelphia Here I Come | 17 Oct - 1 Dec 2007 | 5 | 46 |
| Theatre | Ten 42 Productions | Wallflowering | 23 Apr - 27 May 2007 | 11 | 26 |
| Theatre | Rough Magic | Improbable Frequency | 30 Oct - 8 Dec | 9 | 32 |
| Theatre | Red Kettle | Boy Soldier | Jan 30 -29 Mar 2008 | 10 | 35 |
| | | | | Total TTE Funding Theatre: | €1,034,220 |

| Artform | Producer | Tour Title | Tour dates | Venues | Number of performances |
|------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Traditional Arts | Na Píobairí Uileann | Piperlink | 4 - 30 Sept 2007 | 16 | 18 |
| Traditional Arts | Mary McPartlan | The Dark Horse on the Wind Tour | 24 Oct - 9 Nov 2007 | 11 | 11 |
| Traditional Arts | Baltimore Fiddle Fair | Fiddle Fair Showcase | 27 - 30 Aug 2007 | 4 | 4 |
| Traditional Arts | Tom Sherlock Mgt | Barr go Sáil / Heel to Toe | 9 Nov - 1 Dec 2007 | 6 | 6 |
| Traditional Arts | Rural Arts Network | Liam O'Maonlai & Rural Arts Networks | 28 Sept - 13 Oct 2007 | 5 | 5 |
| | | | | Total TTE Funding Traditional Arts: | €208,200 |

| Artform | Producer | Tour Title | Tour dates | Venues |
|----------------|---|--|--|-----------------|
| Visual Arts | WHAT- Waterford Healing Arts Trust | Beyond the Gallery | 6 Sep 2007 - 22 May 2008 | 4 |
| Visual Arts | KCAT - Kilkenny Collective for Arts Talent | Peers in Portrait | 25 May 2007 - 15 Mar 2008 | 5 |
| Visual Arts | Model Art & Niland Gallery | Seán McSweeney - A Retrospective | 26 May - 15 Jul 2007 | 3 |
| Visual Arts | Tigh Filí | 24 hr non stop art | 28 th - 29 th Oct/ 21 - 22 Sept 2007 | 4 |
| Visual Arts | Lorg Printmakers | Within & Without | 12-15 Nov 2007 / 27-30 Nov 2007 | 3 |
| Visual Arts | Brian Fay | Some time now | 24 Apr - 18 Nov 2007 | 3 |
| Visual Arts | The Ark | Mandscape | 5 Oct 2007 - 29 Mar 2008 | 5 |
| Visual Arts | Mary Dempsey | What Happened | 7-9 Aug 2007 / Month of Sept/ 5-12 Oct | 4 |
| Visual Arts | Wexford Arts Centre | Surface Tension | 10 Feb 2007 - 26 Jul 2008 | 4 |
| Visual Arts | Model Arts & Niland Gallery | Andy Warhol: the silver factory 1964-1968 | 5 Oct - 22 Dec 2007, 22 Feb - 8 Jun 2008 / 4 Sept - 19 Oct 2008 | 2 |
| Visual Arts | Andrew Duggan | Dislocate | 18 Oct - 8 Nov 2007 | 2 |
| Architecture | Irish Architecture Foundation | SubUrban to SuperRural | 10 April - 21 May, 23 May - 8 Jun, 14 Jun - 30 July, 2 Aug - 29 Aug, 4 Sept - 5 Oct 2007 | 4 |
| Architecture | Irish Architecture Foundation | 'Line to Surface' - Urban Void / Extended City | 22 Jan - 6 Feb, 14 - 28 Feb, 6 - 28 March 2008 | 3 |
| | | | Total TTE Funding Visual Arts (including Architecture): | €340,375 |

For details about the validity of this sample of tours, see
Limitations of the Study below

4.2 Research Methods

The project collected qualitative and quantitative data from 50 producers. We also gathered a range of support data to augment and qualify the analytical work. Action research embraces methodologies that do not 'see' people or their behaviours as subjects. Rather, it engages with practitioners as participants in the process and as researchers and contributors in their own right, thereby learning about what they do. We embraced multiple methodologies in our approach to learning about touring. At the outset, and in agreement with the Arts Council, we agreed a principle of non-attribution. That means that the qualitative and quantitative evidence provided in this report is not identified directly with any tour producer. The exception to this principle is the case study work presented in Appendices III - VI.

4.3 Scale and Organising Structures

As the data began to be collected it was found that there was no consistent relationship between expenditure patterns and the numbers of people 'on the road'³. We found that six distinct organising structures are used in touring practice (see 4.3.1 below):

- The Individual Artist-Producer⁴;
- The Independent Producer;
- The Producing Company/Resource & Services Organisation;
- The Co-Producing Network of Venues/Arts Centres working with a participating Artist/Production Company and/or Resource & Services Organisation;
- The Single Venue/Arts Centre Producer with a participating Artist/Producing Company/Resource & Services Organisation;
- A Network of independent, community focused Producers.

4.3.1 Tour Organising Structures

Individual Artist Producer (10 tours)

This is an artist who conceives artistic content and/or performs as part of the tour. This Producer may act on behalf of, or front, an artistic collective. Typically, there is no organising structure, although a Producer may receive some public subsidy either as an individual or through the artistic group being represented. The Producer takes on the responsibility for structuring the finance and managing the planning, marketing and all aspects of production.

3 Detailed analysis of issues surrounding the understanding of scale may have been possible with a smaller number of disciplines but was not achievable with the timeframe of *The Touring Experiment*, the range of disciplines and the available budget. Subsequent research studies may examine this finding further.

4 Some disciplines use the term Promoter or Curator- the term Producer as it is used in *The Touring Experiment* refers to the individual(s) with responsibility for determining the artistic core, sourcing the finance and organising the tour as well as for feeding back information to the financial backers or granting institution.

Independent Producer, Curator, Promoter (5 tours)

The Producer may receive small levels of public subsidy and does not retain performers, actors or artists but hires on a show-by-show basis, or manages/arranges a tour on behalf of artists.

Producing Company/ Resource and Services Organisation (23 tours)

This is the most common structure. Companies tend to be limited by guarantee, publicly subsidised with financial, artistic, marketing and management capacities.

Co-Producing Network of Venues/Arts Centres with a participating Artist/Producing Company/Resource and Services Organisation (2 tours)

This structure, exclusive to theatre, involved Co-Producers, usually publicly subsidised companies limited by guarantee, who together with a Producing Company or Artist jointly finance a tour for the purpose of generating and customising arts productions or events for the network's audiences. The networks have varying and different levels of collaboration from equal levels of decision making and responsibility on all the artistic, financial, planning, management, marketing and production components, to simpler, less collaborative structures.

Single Venue/Arts Centre Producer with a participating Artist/Producing Company /Resource and Service Organisation (8 tours)

This structure involved a single Venue or Arts Centre together with a Producing Company (both of which were likely to be publicly subsidised companies limited by guarantee) or an individual Artist. They jointly produced a tour for the purpose of generating arts productions and events for their own and other arts centres' audiences.

Network of Independent, community focused Producers (1 tour)

This organising structure was used only in Traditional Arts. This was a network of independent producers with no organisation structure that generated a tour for the purposes of customising arts productions and events for specific local audiences and to present the work in a network of unconventional venues (pubs, halls, churches etc). This structure was initiated through the LEADER funding model as part of its rural development programme.

4.4 Action Research with Tour Producers

The *action research* process involved conducting structured interviews with Key Informants, structured research meetings with Tour Producers in advance of their tours, collecting qualitative and quantitative data about each tour using multiple methods, a producer's post-tour report, commissioning case studies in four artforms, commissioning audience research in distinct locations around Ireland, detailed pre and post tour income and expenditure accounts and audience attendance and box office incomes for performing arts only.

a) *Key Informant Interviews*⁵

The purpose was to provide *The Touring Experiment* with a foundation for understanding what the issues in touring were and to begin the process of formally separating anecdote from fact. The 12 key informants were in agreement on five central themes:

1. To develop an accurate understanding of audiences based on evidence.
2. To create an awareness and use of familiarity/brand and identity.
3. To recognise the quality of work and track record of participants.
4. To recognise clear evidence of viable well worked out relationships involving venues and production companies.
5. To recognise the quality of management and delivery of standards.

b) *Pre-tour Research Meetings*⁶

The purpose was to discuss, in an open manner, each tour Producer's own objectives (artistic, audience, financial etc) and to give each Producer an opportunity to discuss and test out various research propositions. The meeting was also used to ensure that each Producer understood their commitment to provide *The Touring Experiment* with qualitative and quantitative data.

c) *Post-tour Reports*

Post-tour reports provided essential feedback from Producers on their own evaluation of the tour and the learning they acquired. These confidential and commercially sensitive reports form part of *The Touring Experiment* records and are not included in the main report and appendices.

d) *Tour Case Studies*⁷

The Touring Experiment commissioned four case studies of tours in Dance, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts.

- Dance: Dance Theatre of Ireland tour of '*Slow Down*';
- Music: Armoniosa tour of '*For Several Friends*'.
- Theatre: NOMAD network tour of '*Conversations on a Homecoming*';
- Visual Arts: Wexford Arts Centre tour of '*Surface Tension*';

Each case study reports from a number of touring perspectives i.e. from the producer's, the venue, and the artistic, creative and production personnel on each tour.

5 For a detailed description of the Key Informant Interviews see Appendix II - The Touring Experiment Interim Report November 2007 (in particular section 1.4, pages 7 -9).

6 For a detailed overview of issues identified by the 50 participating producers see Appendix VII - Summary of 50 research meetings conducted by TTE with tour producers .

7 See Appendices III - VI for case studies in Dance, Music , Theatre and Visual Arts respectively.

e) The Audience Attitudes & Behaviour Study⁸

The Touring Experiment commissioned an Audience Attitudes & Behaviour Study that relied on focus group and exit survey methodologies and operated in close consultation with the staff of four arts centres widely spread around the country. The research objectives of the Audience Study were:

- To ascertain and evaluate audience attitudes and behaviour towards consuming arts and culture in their local arts centre;
- To establish the response to professional touring productions and their impact upon audience attendance;
- To provide direction for audience development in relation to professional touring productions and exhibitions.

f) Tour Incomes and Expenditures⁹

The Touring Experiment has produced the following baseline data:

- Projected and actual expenditures of a national tour analysed against various income sources (e.g. venue guarantees, public grants, box office etc);
- Projected and actual box office incomes;
- Projected and actual guarantees offered by venues and box office split deals made with venues where guarantees did not apply;
- Fees paid to creative personnel;
- Fees paid to production personnel;
- Production expenditure;
- Technical and transport expenditure;
- Marketing/PR expenditure;
- Management expenditure;
- Subsistence expenditure (accommodation and per diems).

g) Audience Attendance and Box Office Incomes for performing arts only

- Projected audience attendance numbers against projected box office income;
- Actual paying audience numbers achieved per performance/event;
- Analysis of paying audience numbers against total audience *capacity*;
- Total audience numbers including complimentary tickets and invited audiences;
- Total box office income per performance/event (where applicable).

8 See Appendix VIII - Audience Attitudes & Behaviour (Phases I - III) conducted by PCC

9 See Appendix IX - Artform Analyses and Findings in Six Artforms.

4.5 'The Recommendations' and 'Practical Interventions'

The Touring Experiment's empirical evidence has been analysed and interpreted for the purposes of making policy on touring in line with the Arts Council's project brief. The term *Recommendation* in this context, as extracted by the research team from the evidence, means that the findings of *The Touring Experiment* indicate that one or more strategies *must* be considered in order that touring evolve beyond the tensions described in the review of Arts Council touring policy at 1.2 above. A *Practical Intervention*, on the other hand, indicates that there are a number of different and/or complementary approaches that can be taken in solving problems or addressing the needs of touring in each artform.

When we analysed the various sources of information described above we initially used four perspectives as a tool to help us capture the key points of learning that were embedded in the mass of information we had to work with. From our review of the history of touring policy it was clear that *audience* and *infrastructure* were of central importance, and it became clear to us from the key informant interviews, case studies and other sources that it would also be important to analyse data using the perspectives of *artist* and *artform*. These perspectives helped us to shape our findings, policy recommendations and practical interventions. Here is a summary description of how we interpreted these four perspectives:

1. *Audience:*

This includes issues to do with understanding audience needs and behaviours; developing and improving audience engagement with the work; identifying factors that influence audience behaviours and preferences.

2. *Infrastructure:*

This includes issues to do with the 'soft' infrastructure that is embodied in personnel, skills, expertise, planning, organisational and institutional relationships and the 'hard' infrastructure that is embodied in the available venues and physical facilities.

3. *Artist:*

This includes issues to do with welfare, employment opportunities and career development.

4. *Artform:*

This includes issues to do with artform development, repertoire revival and renewal.

4.6 Limitations of the study

The Touring Experiment was subject to a number of methodological limitations:

- The overall dance sample is small and the tours within the sample are all small/medium scale, but, on balance, representative of the kinds of contemporary dance tours taking place in Ireland;
- The literature sample required considerable and overt support in order to be generated. This involved the artform specialist making contact with organisations and artists with a view to encouraging tours;
- The Visual Arts sample is wide and appropriate but in some cases required considerable and overt support in order to be generated and in all cases was subject to a shortened lead-in time which prevented a number of potential participants from submitting touring proposals;
- The timescale within which *The Touring Experiment* operated did not fit with scheduling of a range of significant performing groups particularly in music and traditional arts and this created a limitation of the size of the population of potential participants in these fields;
- The majority of the touring budget available went to supporting a comprehensive theatre sample. This meant that the theatre analysis, and accompanying practical interventions are more comprehensive;
- The case study evidence base was limited because *The Touring Experiment* did not have the resources to pay for, or manage a case study in *each* of the six artforms;
- The producers that provided *The Touring Experiment* with evidence were those who responded successfully to an open call for touring proposals in the hope that they would receive a public grant in support of their tour. Some of these producers are regular clients of the Arts Council. As grant recipients and as participants in *The Touring Experiment*, evidence may be symptomatic of grant-reactive behaviour. However, in light of our objectives, this limitation was also a strength because the evidence provided insight into grant-reactive behaviour.

5. What we discovered

5.1 Core Findings - The Arts Council

1. There is a leadership opportunity for the Arts Council to change the culture and practice of touring in line with its own stated policies, goals and aspirations.
2. To ensure that there is an effective and coherent policy for touring and that this policy that is linked accurately to explicit goals, the Arts Council needs to agree that there is at least one good and permanent reason for touring. Our research suggests that this primary reason must be about the Audience. The Audience is both the taxpayer who funds touring and the consumer who enjoys it. The Audience represents an intrinsic reward for artists and an essential force in developing appreciation of the arts. Placing the Audience at the centre of a strategy has clear positive implications for how tours are constructed, planned, promoted and delivered in each artform.
3. The Arts Council needs to consider its position on touring as an appropriate or effective activity for all artforms. Our evidence suggests that, in some cases, touring does not seem to have any bearing on audience engagement or development of certain artforms. For example, in Dance, we learned that workshops do not deliver audiences for touring shows, and the PCC audience work indicates that audiences are very poorly informed about, or resistant to, contemporary dance work.
4. The Arts Council needs to adopt a long-term view, phased over six years (2009 - 2014).

5.2 Core Findings - The Audiences

1) Programming content

- Touring Networks increase audience attendance and satisfaction when partners share artistic and financial responsibilities and work to form a common vision whilst ensuring that the audience is always at the centre of all decisions;
- Touring Networks strengthen the curatorial basis for offering arts to local and regional audiences which is important as there is evidence that curatorial expertise is inconsistent (Visual Arts, Music and Literature in particular) and that many multi-disciplinary venue personnel hold expertise in one art form only with theatre being to the forefront;
- Audience attendances are low in all art forms when there is no recognisable brand involved in the tour (e.g. a play, a playwright, a musician, a composer, an actor, an artist, a presenting company, a music ensemble etc.);
- Audience attendances range from satisfactory to 'sold out' when there is a recognisable brand involved;

2) Marketing

- Tour producers and venue personnel are not utilising the concepts and practices of Relationship Marketing. Our evidence indicates that marketing

budgets are being spent on public relations, print materials for general distribution and some print/media advertising. This means that, in general, marketing resources are not being allocated to reduce customer turnover, increase customer loyalty and retain customers from one event to the next. Tour producers and venues are not building a relationship of continual satisfaction between the touring producer/presenter and the regular attendee. Marketing resources may be allocated to maximise the number of transactions in a concentrated period in order to ensure that a touring production/event gets a 'good house' for the period of the booking. This finding was supported by the fact that few producers and venues are capturing, retaining or updating detailed data about attendances;

- Marketing budgets varied considerably and, with the exception of well-branded and some network-produced tours, there appeared to be no clear relationship between marketing expenditure and actual audience attendance;
- There is confusion between producers and receiving venues about who has responsibility for a) communicating with potential audience and b) securing audience attendance at professional touring productions/events;

3) *Grant-reactive behaviour*

- *The Touring Experiment* reinforced existing, well-established patterns of grant-reactive behaviour, rather than encourage innovation and risk taking. This behaviour is well documented throughout our evidence and suggests an ambiguity around the reasons for producing and receiving a touring production. Our evidence indicates audiences are not at the centre of the decision-making process. The activity of applying for, receiving and using a touring grant may be an end in itself. In the case of Arts Council funded organisations, touring grants may be used to shore up other revenue deficits or to maintain the client relationship.
- We found evidence of grant-reactive behaviours also in the following;
 1. A lack of box office targets being set by producers in advance of the tour;
 2. The provision of venue guarantee (a financial guarantee given by a venue against loss of income for the producer) had the effect of diminishing the urgency of relationship-marketing activities;
 3. Producers' unwillingness to take financial risks and/or a desire to tour only when all financial risk had been removed.

5.3 A Review of Arts Council Touring Policies from 1970s to 2000¹⁰

As part of the preparation for *The Touring Experiment* we undertook an examination of 30 years of Arts Council Annual Reports¹¹. This examination provided an account of Arts Council touring policies, decisions on expenditure, and an understanding of the historical patterns in touring behaviour in all of the artforms we researched.

¹⁰ See Appendix I - A Review of Touring Policy from 1970s - 2000.

¹¹ Ibid.

The main finding of the review is that touring has been a recurrent challenge for successive Arts Councils. As we mentioned in our introduction, we have identified three principle conflicting tensions that have remained constant throughout the period.

5.3.1. Strategies that were designed to boost levels of touring activity, so that audiences could access a greater spread of high quality work around the country, conflicted with other funding strategies.

This tension produced a specific pattern in funding decisions; strategies designed to boost levels of touring activity, particularly in the performing arts, were not sustained. One explicit reason was the desire to support the touring needs of new venues but this strategy was not maintained consistently (see Appendix I Table 1). Other reasons are unclear. Anecdotal information of low audience attendance and increased costs in touring, as reported in various annual reports, may have influenced this conflict. Annual reports from the 1980s show a lively interest in audience attendance at touring events, but the strategy in relation to audience or to audience needs was not dealt with explicitly. Other determinants may have been the general increase in costs of the new arts infrastructure and the increased cost of specialist organisations and other permanent resource structures. With respect to audience attendances, attitudes and behaviours, the lack of baseline data on audience attendance and purchasing patterns was probably fundamental to this tension (See Study on Audience Behaviours and Attitudes, Appendix VIII, and Appendix IX for audience attendance data at Touring Experiment tours).

Partnership for the Arts 2006 - 2008 (December 2005) is specific in its desire to address this issue in relation to touring - *“Provide for audiences’ needs by introducing an effective touring policy”* (2005; 59). The document also states the desire to support evidence based audience analysis in venues, to support venues, and to produce national research on audience attendance.

5.3.2. The need to support local indigenous art set against the need to support national and recognisable touring brands;

Council strategies designed to increase the amount and quality of art being made at the local level and promoted at the national level conflicted with the desire to invest in the development of national, specialist touring brands (artists, organisations, venues, groups, shows, playwrights, musicians, singers, performers and institutions).

An examination of Arts Council spending strategies and behaviours over the period reveals that specialist ‘touring’ or branded companies/artists/organisations/venues have always been at risk of losing funds in favour of the alternate strategy - spreading touring funds thinly across the entire arts sector. Over the period we studied, funding shifted between the two strategies without any apparent guidelines or rationale.

Sometimes, the strategy to support national initiatives was explicit and consistent, e.g. the Arts Council’s schools’ visual arts exhibition scheme,

the Irish Theatre Company, and the establishment of Music Network. The Arts Council's Theatre Touring Scheme was intended to develop excellence at the level of the organisation or company on the assumption that excellence at this level would satisfy audiences.

5.3.3. The conflicting attractions of grant related schemes designed to encourage risk taking, and those that are designed to compensate for the exposure to risk.

Grant aided touring schemes, designed to encourage risk taking, actually conflicted with the desire to manage the effects and consequences of touring-related risks. This pattern was counterproductive. On the one hand, grants were issued to encourage producers to take risks on the basis that touring was regarded as an essential mechanism for development. On the other, the Council had established a pattern of compensating organisations against the financial loss or consequences of risk-taking e.g. grants to venues to compensate against loss of box office income or support for payment of guarantees. This tension helps to explain *The Touring Experiment's* finding that the management of touring is influenced by a range of *grant-reactive* behaviours. In our view it is the absence of a unifying rationale for touring, rather than the specific strengths or shortcomings of any particular funding mechanism, that affirms the need for a new way of doing things that learns from the experience of the last three decades. The tensions and conflicts identified above are symptomatic of a policy gap that can now be addressed dynamically and comprehensively by the Arts Council.

Finally, there are two additional, historical features that are directly connected to all three tensions outlined above. These two features have subsequently been supported by *The Touring Experiment's* findings and analysis. This suggests that strategies for touring will continue to be interrupted and inconsistently implemented unless, at a minimum, these two issues are addressed:

- a) The lack of a consistent, evidence base to find out the levels of expenditure on touring productions, exhibitions and events and the levels of audience attendance. We succeeded in generating rich and informative baseline data in this regard;
- b) The nature of touring as a 'fair-weather' activity. Traditionally, if the Arts Council's budget was under threat of cut or indicated stagnancy, touring activities suffered. Our findings indicate that touring is a fundamental mechanism in the distribution of arts and a public service.¹²

5.4 The Current Arts Council Context

TTE's current context is *Partnership for the Arts* 2006 - 2008. This is the Arts Council's strategic plan which makes explicit a number of values and objectives relating to artists, audiences, organisational relationships and activities.

In *Partnership for the Arts*, the Arts Council has set out a number of high level values and goals that establish a clear and unambiguous policy context for touring.

12 See Appendix I - A Review of Arts Council Touring Policies 1970s to 2000.

These values and goals are expressed in *Partnership for the Arts* as follows:

The Public:

“We have two responsibilities to the public. One is the responsibility to provide a wide variety of opportunities to experience the arts. The second is a ‘duty of care’ - to the tax payer in particular - to ensure that public funds allocated to the arts are dispersed fairly and in accordance with stated policies and good public-service- practice”. (Page 9)

Long-term development:

“We seek to make our decisions for the benefit of the arts in the long term, and we are committed to working with others in achieving long-term goals, while responding, where necessary, to immediate and urgent needs”. (Page 9)

Arts Council Goals:

- a) Affirm and promote the value of the arts in society

“Engage with government departments and agencies, and with the voluntary and private sectors, to ensure that the arts are central in society”. (Page 16)

- b) Support artists in reaching audiences for their work

“Revise and improve our supports for the dissemination of artistic work through touring broadcast, publishing and recording”; (page 19)

“Design and implement a new programme to strengthen the marketing capacity of arts organisations”. (Page 19)

- c) Make it possible for people to extend and enhance their experiences of the arts.

“Support arts organisations and other specialist organisations and bodies to enable more people to experience the arts”.

5.5 The Touring Experiment Findings on Audiences

Audience Attitudes & Behaviour Study

We commissioned an Audience Attitudes & Behaviour Study from Public Communications Centre (PCC) Ltd, which was conducted in three phases between April 2007 and April 2008¹³. This was done in close consultation with the staff of four arts centres around the country;

- The Ramor Theatre, Virginia, Co. Cavan
- Siamsa Tíre, Tralee, Co. Kerry
- An Grianán Theatre, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
- West Cork Arts Centre, Skibbereen, Co. Cork

The Study has produced a range of informed and extremely useful findings. The Study relied on two sets of focus group encounters, held 12 months apart, with people who are *regular* attendees at their local theatre/arts centre, and those who are *occasional* attendees. Focus groups were conducted prior to The Touring Experiment productions going on tour and again post tours. In addition to the focus groups, the four participating venues conducted exit

¹³ See Appendix VIII – Audience Attitudes & Behaviour (Phases I –III) conducted by PCC.

surveys around the productions and other programme elements. All of these were led by PCC's Audience Study research consultant.

The main findings and conclusions of the Audience Study indicate that:

- Theatre is a 'top of mind' art form for audiences;
- Audiences have mixed experiences - the *regular* attendees are well catered for but the *occasional* attendees do not realise how well they are catered for;
- There have been noticeable changes in touring between April 07 and April 08. The 'regulars' recognise the growth in touring programme, stating they were "spoiled for choice" so much that they could not go to everything. The 'occasionals' have missed the extent of that change because they are not as engaged with their local venue. Between April 2007 and April 2008, there was an improvement in the volume of the professional touring offering;
- Audiences place a clear distinction on the difference between professional and amateur productions having a high regard for quality performance and appreciation for the growth in professional offering. However, they cannot always distinguish between professional and amateur touring companies from the promotional material produced by venues and companies;
- Audiences are aware that improvements in general accessibility (more venues, more events, more art forms) has helped reduce the sense of elitism previously attached to the arts;
- Regularity of attendance at professional shows strengthens engagement with arts and culture. However, audiences are *reactive* rather than *proactive*. The audience accepts responsibility for not actively seeking or remembering information. Venues and arts centres receive no feedback from occasional or non-attending audience members;
- The audience needs to receive promotional material 'in the hand, through the ear and through the eye'. Occasional attendees are more dependent upon the detail in the brochures and marketing material. They will dismiss the write-up if the show title or visual imagery is not attractive. Focus group participants want venues to use email and web communications more effectively;
- It is clear that a positive experience of a production company sells its next performance. This is evidenced by focus group responses to productions by certain companies in the project. Repeat visits by a quality company increases audience attendance. This reinforces the importance of familiarity with a brand;
- There is a critical need for guidance, as a production company's name is not top of mind. The audience is far more likely to respond to the name of a production, play or artists name when choosing a show. There is limited recall of professional company names, limited knowledge of established names, and this is unlikely to change in the short-term. Familiarity with the show itself is more influential. The audience is willing to accept a production company presenting a show or play that is recognisable. This requires the production company to actively promote itself;
- It is the responsibility of the local arts centre to offer an attractive programme, especially at the start of the season. Audiences feel that this begins in September. The venue must strategically and effectively communicate its offering. This includes incentives for attendance with

competitive prices and special offers, and to reward loyal custom with relationship marketing tools,¹⁴ such as discounts, and added value events such as post-show talks;

- It is the responsibility of the production company to offer popular shows, to deliver a quality performance, to develop its image, grow its reputation and engage regular custom;
- It is the responsibility of the audience to pro-actively seek information on forthcoming shows, book tickets and recommend to others and spread the word within the community.

5.6 Overview of The Touring Experiment Tour Attendance by artform¹⁵

| Artform | No. Tours for which audience data was received | Range of audience attendances per performance/event recorded across our tour sample. (shown as number of people) | | Did familiarity have an impact on audience attendances? |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| | | Paid attendance | Paid attendance + complimentary tickets | |
| Dance (contemporary only): | 4 | 19 - 87 | 35 - 138 | No |
| Literature: | 4 (3 lit tours could not provide complete data) | Not available | 15 - 53 ¹ | N/A (No TTE tours by well known authors) |
| Music: | 9 | Not available | 27 -240 | Yes |
| Traditional Arts: | 5 | Not available | 43 - 223 | Yes |
| Theatre: | 12 | 24 -377 | 34 - 406 | Yes |

14 Relationship Marketing differs from other forms of marketing in that it targets an audience with more directly suited information on products or services which suit retained customer's interests, as opposed to direct or intrusion marketing which focuses upon acquisition of new clients by targeting majority demographics based upon prospective client lists.

15 The high level of audience attendance figures with regard to one tour in the literature sample reflects the inclusion of a large civic reception in the producer's home city as part of the tour schedule. When this tour is taken into the equation, the range of attendance per event for the literature tours becomes 15 - 411 which skews the audience figures.

Overview of Estimated The Touring Experiment Tour Attendance in Visual Arts
(including Architecture)¹⁶

| Artform | No. Tours for which audience data was received | Range of estimated audience attendances per venue recorded across our tour sample. (shown as number of people) | | Did familiarity have an impact on audience attendances? |
|---|--|--|-------------------------|---|
| | | Paid attendance | Non-paying attendance | |
| Visual Arts (including Architecture) | 13 | Not applicable | 33 – 3,303 ² | Yes |

The findings of the Audience Attitudes and Behaviour Study and the evidence relating to audience attendance generated from our action research indicates that the culture of touring needs to change and audiences must be at the heart of this change. See 6.1 for further details.

¹⁶ The attendance figures here represent estimated attendances by venue per tour. Four sets of data were incomplete, as the tours had not concluded within the confines of the research period of The Touring Experiment. Two further tours in this sample were unable to provide audience attendance estimates for their tour.

6. The Next Phase – Conclusions and Recommendations

The Touring Experiment proposes that the Council's future involvement in touring should develop over a six-year period (2009 - 2014) and that it must adopt a precise focus on the needs of audiences in order to:

- (a) Develop greater familiarity and experience of touring productions and exhibitions;
- (b) Increase the number of people who attend touring productions/events and exhibitions;
- (c) Facilitate art form-led initiatives and innovations.

6.1 Focus on Audience in Touring Policy (2009 - 2014)

The Arts Council needs to determine and agree the strategic purpose of touring. Over the years, policies for touring seem to have been reactive to the perceived needs of venues. There was also a clear emphasis on the needs of production companies.¹⁷ The policy aim was to generate activity to service the infrastructure.

As a general comment, it is fair to say that the principal reason for this was to support touring activity at a time when Ireland's arts infrastructure was still in early development.

The evidence of *The Touring Experiment* indicates that an audience-centred strategy will increase the levels of audience engagement and audience attendances and this assertion is supported by the following key findings from the artform evidence and analysis:

1. **Dance:** Audiences for contemporary dance are low, comprising small loyal groups in distinct geographic areas. Significant policy interventions are required to increase audiences for dance.
2. **Literature:** An average attendance of 25 people is, at present, considered acceptable for a reading irrespective of whether or not it is in a touring context. Almost all touring events in literature were free of charge.
3. **Music:** In general audiences do not appear to have been central to tour planning in music. Pre tour projected box office figures suggest that audiences are not well understood by artists, venues and producers and that creating and maintaining long-term relationships with audiences has never been a priority.
4. **Theatre:** The most successful tours were those where the audience was already familiar with the play, cast members or the production company presenting the work or where the tour was presented by venue networks. This reinforces the Audience study work which found that audiences respond to familiarity/brand and it highlighted the

¹⁷ The term Production Company includes producers in each artform e.g. Publishers, Curators etc.

difficulty of generating audiences on tour for new or unfamiliar plays and production companies.

5. **Traditional Arts:** Audience-led tours presented by networks and promoted at a local level provide attractive work for audiences and good attendances, while strengthening the local and regional venue/network/promoter infrastructure.
6. **Visual Arts** (including Architecture): Few venues had the capacity to record or monitor audience attendance. There is little evidence to suggest that information on visual arts audiences is being captured by venues and producers, suggesting no shared view on the nature or importance of audience. All touring events in the visual arts were free of charge.
7. **Networks:** Theatre and Traditional Arts audience-led tours that were organised by networks provided attractive work for audiences and good attendances which served to strengthen local and regional venue/promoter infrastructure in these art forms while enhancing and improving the professional experience of the network participants.

6.2 Core Recommendations

The recommendations for Arts Touring in Ireland address immediate opportunity, longer term strategic and systemic developments and important practical interventions that are essential to improve and evolve touring practice in Ireland.

Recommendation 1:

Develop reforms and supports to enhance Audience-centred touring.

Possible ways of doing this include strategies such as A, B, C and D below:

- A. *Create new touring schemes by art form with audience focussed criteria¹⁸ aimed at networks, production companies, curators and independent producers.*

The creation of Arts Council schemes would integrate art form policy, development and delivery within one structure for strategy, implementation and funding. This would help ensure the creation of a good regional and seasonal spread of touring work of varying scale across the art forms.

The direct decision and endorsement by the Arts Council will be interpreted as a stamp of approval and quality by audiences. It should generate more strategic activities aimed at building attendance patterns and increasing audience engagement in work of visiting professional companies and artists.

It will encourage a clear curatorial approach by networks/producers/companies/curators based on informed programme choices drawn from hard evidence. It will increase work opportunities for artists and production

18 See Appendices III- VI (Case Studies in four artforms), Appendix VII (Summary of the 50 research meetings held with producers) and Appendix VIII (Audience Attitudes & Behaviour (Phases I -III) conducted by PCC Ltd.) for supporting information.

personnel, and guarantee professional touring work throughout Ireland, selected strategically to meet needs and priorities of audiences, artists, companies and venues.

B. *Refine relationships with and provide funding to existing successful organisations and service providers illustrating the vision, ability and capacity to deliver audience centred touring.*

This approach would ensure the touring policy and funding behaviour of participating organisations and should lead to greater buy-in by defining a specificity of purpose.

There is evidence from venues that some arts organisations are very good at delivering quality experiences for audiences and artists through touring. This recommendation would therefore make more use of existing expertise and skills dispersed throughout the arts community. Touring practice and expertise would become standardised.

However, there is a need for clarity of remit, and for agreed performance targets and value for money assessments. This recommendation is only feasible with a 3-year commitment, as delivery is problematic without long-term development and professional training. Tour funding would also need to be ring-fenced.

C. *Develop integrated national and international touring policies for Ireland through engagement and partnership with state agencies and organisations with a national/or international arts remit.*

There seems to be little coordination or cohesion built into the very significant allocation of public resources embodied in a range of agencies that have varying levels of responsibility and involvement in the arts.

There is an opportunity for the Arts Council to provide policy leadership and initiative in a wide ranging way on certain aspects of touring.

Exceptional events could be made more available or accessible. This will enable regular touring of large scale works, and develop a coherent combined policy on access to the arts for audiences, particularly with reference to new platforms and new ways of experiencing or creating greater access to the arts.

There is little evidence in our research findings of any such collaborative approach among state agencies with arts remits; no evidence of joint planning, policy interaction or service provision.

We recommend touring pilot projects to test feasibility and buy-in. Caution needs to be exercised against institutional politics and drifting across competing remits. Also, engagement with state or local agencies can create heavy administrative burdens for small, unincorporated or voluntary organisations and individual artists.

- D.** *Acknowledge the new methods by which people access and consume the arts at present and crucially, in the future, by researching and supporting new delivery platforms and innovative distribution outlets while taking cognisance of the national and international environmental impact of touring.*

This recommendation is designed to enable arts centres to programme large-scale international events at an affordable price, and encourage arts producers and audiences to engage with new technologies and platforms. Another feature is to engage with the environmental impact of touring work.

Two trends are emerging; there are an increasing number of platforms on which to view arts, and an increasingly personalised experience of the arts is often driven by technology, convenience and marketing.

Evidence of a digital innovation project is the Metropolitan Opera's HD Live season of Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment* relayed into a network of cinemas and theatres in 16 countries including the UK, Australia, Belgium and Norway.

The current thinking on distribution of the arts using digital technology is an environmentally friendly means of bringing work to audiences and which allows audiences to determine when they wish to access the arts.

In the short term, this may only be suitable for those venues that are equipped with digital equipment as part of film programme. Currently, national infrastructure is poor in terms of broadband and cable. However, in the long term, preparing to integrate these initiatives now will create more options for the future of tour programming.

Recommendation 2:

Design supports to improve the touring practice of producers and presenters to enhance audience-centred touring. Central to this is the need to reform the terms and conditions for artists on the road to place artist welfare at heart of tour management in all Arts Council subsidised activity.

Recommendation 2 concentrates on the crucial practical interventions that are central to the improvement and development of touring practice in Ireland. If these interventions are not tackled the status quo will be reinforced and the successful delivery of audience centred touring (as outlined in Recommendation 1 above) in Ireland over the next six years (2009 - 2014) will be unsuccessful. Elements of this might include interventions in four areas: Marketing, Technical, Management and Reform of terms and conditions for touring.

A. Marketing

To support marketing strategies carried out with venues and producers that are informed by audience focussed action research.

At the moment it is difficult to see how touring activity in general is meant to serve audiences because there is little *Touring Experiment* evidence to suggest that venues or companies know and understand their own audiences. The low priority given to expenditure on marketing, promotion and audience development confirms this. A national strategy is essential to encourage a culture of inquiry around audiences and to enable venues to gain a better baseline understanding of them.

Action research should lead to a deeper understanding by venues of local audience needs. This will allow venues to respond more accurately to those needs, provide source material for relationship-building between venue and audience, and increase audience engagement with the venue. The Arts Council's role is strategic and the Council needs to take responsibility for the on-going co-ordination of venue audience research at a national level.

The responsibility for audience relationship marketing lies with venues and companies. Relationship Marketing is an approach that emphasises the continuing relationships that should exist between the organisation and its customers. Relationship marketing is not the same as Public Relations or general promotion work (e.g. sending out a brochure to the mailing list or getting editorial content in a newspaper). It is not clear from our evidence that either the venues and/or the producer understand the distinction.

B. Technical

Create a safer arts environment by classifying Health & Safety standards and technical resources of venues, and by enhancing the skills of technicians.

The aim of this recommendation is to improve the standards of technical management, improve technical equipment and facilities, and ensure best practice in Health and Safety.

It also aims to ensure artists and production teams can work in a safe and conducive environment, increase professionalism and effectiveness of technicians and artists, and improve audience satisfaction. Our tour reports suggest that there were varying standards of technical delivery in venues, and case studies indicate a need for up-skilling personnel in technical management.¹⁹

19 TTE found that the level of technical resources and equipment in venues no longer represents a significant barrier to audience's access to the arts. While existing technical resources and facilities will need regular maintenance work and upgrading over the coming years, issues to do with 'soft' infrastructure require more immediate interventions at this point.

C. Management

Create opportunities for companies/networks/producers/venues/curators and boards to improve capacity in areas such as curatorial skills, strategic, business & financial planning as part of in-service professional training.

There are clear indications that there are varying levels of skills, experience, and expertise among the managers and directors in venues. This is not the same as saying that different venues have different preferences and policies based on an artistic and aesthetic perspective. The experience of artists and companies visiting venues, the choices on offer to audiences, and the way these choices are presented all suggest the need for an intervention aimed at investing in people to help them improve their business performance.

The strategic impact of this recommendation ensures that specialised skills such as tour scheduling, budgeting, accounting, negotiating contracts, rights/ royalties/clearances, insurance, permissions/handling are developed. This improves business performance at both Executive and Board level, and improves relationships between venues and producers. It also creates a positive impact on good governance, human resources management and best practice.

Much of the case study evidence supports the need for this recommendation. For example, one venue network specifically expressed a need to improve its curatorial expertise in literature, music, and visual arts and looked to *The Touring Experiment* for financial support to do so. There are significant levels of staff turnover which may be due to burnout. Management staff are highly mobile, and when they leave there may be an effect on “institutional memory” in venues or companies.

D. Reform Terms & Conditions ‘on the road’

Establish guidelines setting out minimum rates for fees and allowances for mandatory use in any Arts Council funded touring activity to improve the extrinsic rewards for both artists and production personnel.

There are two issues at play here: welfare and equity. The absence of recommended minima for freelancers - who are prevented by law from negotiating collectively for such minima - has to be a matter of concern.

The inequities that this creates between artists engaged as freelance rather than PAYE workers can be very considerable. In this context it seems reasonable for the Arts Council to acknowledge that there is a problem and that it can be addressed within the confines of touring activity, at least. Introducing minimum rates for use in all Arts Council touring activity does not involve the artists in negotiation therefore does not affect the current legal position;

Introducing minimum rates is a leadership opportunity for the Arts Council. A standardised scales of remuneration and terms and conditions for artists and technical /production personnel in touring contexts will contribute to better practice in H&S and will remove a clear inequity.

6.3 Practical Interventions specific to each art form²⁰

The following is a summary of those art form specific, practical interventions that support the two core recommendations of this Report (R1 & R2). In the context of this report a *Practical Intervention* indicates that there are a number of different and/or complementary approaches that can be taken in solving problems or addressing the needs of touring once the Recommendations have been accepted. The Arts Council's support for touring needs to be fine tuned to suit different artforms, therefore many of the Practical Interventions below respond to specific needs identified in one or more artforms, but which may not be common to the needs of others.

CONTEMPORARY DANCE (4 tours)

Evidence from companies, producers, venues and audiences suggests that there is a major challenge ahead in developing an understanding or analysis of audience tastes, needs and preferences - what little evidence there is from venues in this sample suggests that the contemporary dance audience is generally unknown and unpredictable, or at best predictably small.

The evidence suggests that a clear strategic course of action would be to focus on audience engagement and development as a priority for developing contemporary dance touring.

The most common organising structure in the sample is the Producing Company-led model (3 out of 4 tours). The sole exception to this was one tour produced by an Individual Artist Producer.

In line with other artforms, there is evidence of a need for guidelines or standards for artists; welfare, travel, protection and subsistence while on tour.

Practical Interventions - Contemporary Dance:

R1: Audience-centred Reforms and Supports

1. Do not tour contemporary dance until at least 2011 to allow Arts Council to instigate strategic interventions that use touring to drive an audience engagement and development agenda. In some exceptional circumstances fund touring where it is connected to a national or international festival.

2. Create a National Dance Touring scheme with an emphasis on building audience for dance using the model of a dance network of committed presenting venues working with producing companies.

R2: Operational

3. Develop a pool of dedicated, experienced Touring Dance Producers (all genres).

19 See Appendix IX – Artform Analyses and Findings in Six Artforms

LITERATURE (7 tours)

Evidence from the seven tours indicates that the concept of literature touring does not resonate with the general public or with venues. This seemed to be related to the lack of an established touring culture in the literary sector.

Findings from this sample suggest that the Producing Company / Resource and Services Organisation is the most suitable model for touring. This structure seems particularly suitable for touring to a network of libraries – the obvious and most appropriate venue for literature events/touring. It is important to note that there were no tours produced by libraries or a venue network in this sample.

Practical Interventions - Literature:

R1: Audience-centred Reforms and Supports

1. Develop and test a three year scheme aimed at supporting and promoting tours of readings that are initiated and delivered jointly by local arts centres or literature resource organisations working with libraries as the primary venues for events in order to develop readership.

2. Fund a small number of large-scale significant and well-known national and international author tours to arts centres and libraries.

R2: Operational

3. Encourage the growth of curatorial relationships between individual or networks of arts centres and organisers of 'Open Mic' programmes.

4. Implement guidelines to ensure producers manage a written agreement for each author on tour including setting guidelines for author fees and clarifying time commitments, dates, fees and expenses.

MUSIC (9 tours)

Evidence from the nine music tours shows that providing audiences with a varied choice of options in all genres of music is a primary rationale for touring. Touring also provides the artists with a range of opportunities to perform their work before a live audience.

The most common organising structure in the sample is the Producing Company/Resource and Services Organisation-led model (4 out of 9 tours). The sample also contained three tours organised by an Individual Artist Producer, and one each by an Independent Producer and a Single Venue/Arts Centre Producer working with an Artist/Producing Company.

Evidence also shows that venue managers and performing artists see touring as a means of strengthening the market for live performance across musical genres. Therefore, touring is potentially a means for exposing audiences to specialised and niche forms of music and a means of developing audiences for live music in professionally supported venues.

Artists are taking it upon themselves to produce and manage tours as well as performing, irrespective of their individual level of experience and expertise in tour management.

Practical Interventions - Music:

R1: Audience-centred Reforms and Supports

1. Create a network involving venue managers and producing companies working closely with local music producers – all of whom have a proven track record in attracting audiences and creating diverse programmes in music.
2. Create an Action Learning Research Fund for venues and/or producing companies with a national remit to find out what their audiences attend, what their responses are and investigate the most appropriate curatorial options available in order to develop local/national audiences
3. Initiate a fund to support touring by independent producers and individual artist producers working with professional production and management providers combined with a music touring resource service by an existing or a new organisation.

R2: Operational

4. Seek proposals for a Music Sector Conference (to be held annually) - initially concentrating on touring – to create effective networking and showcasing opportunities for producers/promoters/venues in a national and international context and providing services for artists for skills development and capacity building.
5. Adopt and promote good practice guidelines re: minimum acceptable touring artists' fees, allowances and general terms and conditions on the road while on Arts Council subsidised activity.

THEATRE (12 tours)

Theatre is the most established touring artform in Ireland, and is reflected in the sample size available and the level of interest expressed by the theatre sector in *The Touring Experiment*. A number of production companies have a real and proven commitment to touring over a number of years and an increasing number of venues are working to establish more control over the work they present which is illustrated by the network produced tours in our research.

The most common organising structure in the sample is the production company-led model (6 out of 12 tours) and the remaining tours reflected a strong mix of organising structures.

There were varying levels of success in terms of audience attendance. Analysis of the evidence suggests that factors such as unfamiliarity with play or company; poor marketing and lack of word of mouth, or few performances, contributed to poor attendance. Factors such as familiarity with play, company and individual performers, venue promotional activity and word of mouth resulted in high attendances with strong 'brand' being the key ingredient.

Practical Interventions - Theatre:

R1: Audience-centred Reforms and Supports

1. Production Companies: to make funding available to a selection of producing companies with a capacity to deliver audiences, artistic quality and with managerial ability i.e. with a proven track record.
2. Venue Networks: to fund, say, three venue networks by scale/capacity/ regional focus or national spread.
3. National Touring Company: to set up a dedicated National Touring Company (or put out to tender for delivery by an existing company with a core touring remit).
4. Grants Scheme: Arts Council to offer theatre-touring grants on a minimum 18/24-month cycle on a competitive basis to companies with proven track record in touring theatre.
5. Innovation: to support and encourage Innovation by arts centres and local cinemas to present “live” broadcast events from abroad like Opera/ Concerts/ Broadway and West-End Shows.
6. New Work: to decide to only support touring of new plays in their premiere productions from designated touring funds by exception and by established proven playwright or designated touring companies.

R2: Operational

7. Touring Unit: Create a dedicated Arts Council Touring Unit which will monitor tour performance against agreed targets, conduct detailed research on the trends of tour distribution nationally by frequency, genre, and geographical spread, and be responsible for the systematic collection of management information on touring. The Touring Unit will be housed in the Council and will respond to informed programmed choices by both producing companies and venues based on hard evidence.
8. Marketing: Create contract guidelines between producers and venues/arts centres clearly stating who is responsible for what in terms of two distinct areas of tour promotion: a) PR/Media and b) Direct Relationship Marketing Techniques.
9. Technical: Introduce touring guidelines to ensure safe, efficient and reliable planning and delivery of touring theatre and to improve production expertise and standards.
10. Management: Develop management capacity to ensure quality experience for producers, venues/arts centres, staff and audiences and place an emphasis on relationship building and succession.

11. Terms and Conditions: Arts Council to standardise remuneration and subsistence rates to create clarity for actors and production personnel around terms and conditions on the road which should recommend a minimum weekly wage. The rates of subsistence should be standardised in line with real costs.

TRADITIONAL ARTS (5 tours)

Analysis of this sample refuted two assertions about audiences, venues and traditional arts; namely that audiences are well disposed towards traditional music and are likely to attend and that venue managers are generally confident that traditional music events will perform well. No evidence emerged to substantiate these assumptions and this suggests a lack of strategic planning in marketing and promoting coupled with little knowledge of current and potential audiences for traditional arts.

The most common organising structure in the sample is the Independent Producer-led model (2 out of 5 tours). The sample also contained one tour each organised by an Individual Artist Producer, and one each by an Independent Producer, a Co-Producing Network and a Producing Company.

Practical Interventions - Traditional Arts:

R1: Audience-centred Reforms and Supports

- 1.** Encourage/provide support resource for tours by networks of producers thereby developing and improving infrastructure locally for audiences and artists.
- 2.** Introduce a scheme with objectives, criteria and in-built planning and reporting guidelines to support regional or national tours in traditional music prioritising activity led by (a) individual artist producers and (b) networks.

R2: Operational

- 3.** Encourage producers and a network of venues to present and jointly market traditional arts tour with wide audience appeal.
- 4.** Increase curatorial role/input of venues through mentoring scheme with highly skilled independent producers working in the field.
- 5.** Provide guidelines re: Conditions on the Road (per diems, accommodation and travel)

VISUAL ARTS (including ARCHITECTURE) (11 tours)

The evidence suggests a need for professional audience data collection systems in venues so that audience attendance can be measured and more information about visual arts audiences can be captured. Evidence also suggests a need for increased outreach activity in order to develop audiences and bring the artist's work to a wider viewing public.

Organising structures in this sample varied. The most common were the Producing Company/Resource and Services Organisation-led model and the Single Arts Centre-led models (4 each out of 11 tours). The sample also contained three tours organised by an Individual Artist Producer. It was notable that there were no tours in the sample led by Independent Curators, this is regarded as a reflection of the limited timeframe for *The Touring Experiment*.

Evidence shows that there is a limited supply of visual arts curatorial and touring expertise within Ireland. The evidence shows that this sector could greatly benefit from a structured, managed initiative focusing on the diffusion of curatorial expertise, and standardisation in areas such as artists' fees and contracts. This needs to be a multi-annual initiative allowing adequate time-frames for developed planning, delivery and assessment of touring exhibitions.

Practical Interventions - Visual Arts (including Architecture):

R1: Audience-centred Reforms and Supports

1. Create a Touring Unit within the Arts Council (managed directly by the Council) to address outreach activity.
2. Establish a Pilot Scheme for visual arts touring (including architecture) targeted exclusively at experienced curators, venues and collectives of artists.

R2: Operational

3. Arts Council Touring Unit to address issues such as technical, legal and business planning, marketing and minimum professional living standards for artists on the road.
4. Establish a Mentoring Scheme between venues and curators of international standing which would address curatorial content, international contracts and customs clearance, health & safety, appropriateness of venues and international exhibition exchanges.
5. Supplying Guidelines on technical aspects of touring visual arts and architectural exhibitions covering all practical procedures (e.g.: artists/curators fees; technical costs; outreach; cataloguing and documenting; copyright/legal; marketing & press; local promotion).