

JULIE'S BICYCLE 

Moving arts

Managing the carbon impacts of our touring

REPORT

Volume 3: **THEATRE**

Foreword

Tony Wadsworth

Chairman Julie's Bicycle

Since our founding three years ago Julie's Bicycle has published four major research contributions to environmental sustainability for the performing arts; we have developed new industry-specific tools to measure our greenhouse gas impacts; and we have produced resources and guides to help creative businesses to cut their emissions.

This latest work on international touring is our most ambitious to date. Touring is a fragmented, complex and elusive sector unused to collecting and accounting for emissions data. We want this research to trigger a major global shift in the touring industry which puts environmental concerns at the heart of the business. Nothing less. Legislation, carbon pricing and markets are inexorably shifting the ground anyway.

Now is the time for a shared international ambition with the vision and processes that can embed sustainability deeply into our work. We are at a pivotal junction in which the decisions taken today will determine the future of generations to come.

Great leadership is always driven by integrity and by being an example of what you intend to inspire. But instead of relying on one individual we can all do it: and therein lies the heart of our vision.

Special thanks to Niall Black, Philip Brown, Sally Cowling, Paul Handley, Andrew Jones, Bryan Raven, Fern Smith, Rachel Tackley and John Young for their work on the steering group, our funder British Council and to Catherine Bottrill, Christina Tsiarta and the superb team at Julie's Bicycle for this pioneering and extremely challenging contribution to our industry. I hope we will meet it.

Foreword

Theatre Touring Steering Group

Theatre in this country is one of the things we do best. Our theatre traditions are centuries old and touring – whether it be as traveling players or big shows – has always been at the heart of our relationship with our performers, producers and audiences.

Our first priority then is to nurture the capabilities in theatre itself so that it will continue to thrive. Almost a year ago we embarked on this study into the carbon impacts of our touring work. During that time we have discovered a huge appetite to better understand what we are doing now and what we must change.

For most of us taking part, this has been the first attempt to quantify the carbon impact of our touring work. Knowledge is power and this report is a major step forward in our understanding. The real challenge starts here: making our touring as low carbon as we can. And that's not just about greening what we do, it's also about doing what we do differently. We need new approaches, new skills and a shared commitment to taking this issue forward. Though the economic climate is challenging, the cost of not acting is too great.

Quick to understand the vision, the industry is now seeking practical support and advice which will focus our collective efforts on the most useful actions. This report takes the first steps in recommending practical things we can do to get started. It is our collective responsibility to act now to ensure that theatre can continue to be made, shared and enjoyed for centuries to come.

Preface

Alison Tickell

When we began researching the environmental impacts of British based touring bands, theatres and orchestras last September we had no idea that the scientific and political framework within which we were working would change so dramatically. The month between mid- November and mid-December seeded sudden doubt in the integrity of science and witnessed political disarray in Copenhagen. Now we have become hesitant and it is clear that for the vast majority the resumption of economic growth ranks far higher than action on human- induced climate change.

However, trajectories for greenhouse gas emissions combined with our knowledge of related environmental concerns such as species extinction and ocean acidification remain the stuff of high tragedy. After hopes were so dramatically dashed in the last moments of 2009 we are now experiencing the onset of uncertainty which makes it harder to gauge appropriate responses and, crucially, take decisive action. Already I see this in the cultural sector – it shimmies between stances that could easily tip over to schisms: either to deal with carbon dioxide, or to promote overall sustainability. This is a false opposition; it polarises identity and paralyses action; above all it unveils how deeply uncomfortable we are with uncertainty. If ever the arts could intervene and bridge the 'eithers' and the 'ors' it is now.

Before embarking on the report it is worth anticipating and heading off likely apprehensions. We do not suggest that we stop touring or that international touring is worse than domestic, that

large-scale touring is excessive, or that bands are worse than orchestras. There are no goodies and baddies; in reality comparisons of this kind are rarely useful and tend instead to splinter arts communities and reinforce stereotypes. What is much more interesting is that this broad collection of people have come together and given freely of their time and painstakingly gathered data because everyone has committed to understanding their part in this crisis.

Every day we use – and waste – huge quantities of energy. The degradation of the planet – including human-induced climate change – boils down to inequitable over-consumption largely perpetrated in developed countries. Sadly it is not within our direct capacity to prevent wholesale species from extinction but it is possible to reduce our energy consumption by planning routing, or flying less. Reducing consumption and decarbonising our touring will return a direct positive net profit to the environment, including species preservation – not to mention ethical, reputational and financial benefits.

The research has highlighted environmental costs and existing fiscal mechanisms intended to account for them. To date our market system has not begun to reflect the true costs of environmental impacts; so if we are anxious about financial stability we must surely factor in cost considerations that give us the long view. A resilient international performing arts industry that flourishes for generations will be one that anticipates its financing to operate

within ecological limits. This is simple good sense.

We set out to probe the business of touring, harvesting the abundant creative raw materials from which to craft a touring industry that puts environmental concerns at its heart. Our goal? To thrust the issue of environmental impacts, starting with decarbonisation, into the heart of the touring industry so that it becomes important enough to provoke an industrial shift.

We have produced a three-volume research study, each volume with a voice of its own but there is much common content. Each sector – bands, theatres and orchestras – considers itself unique, quite distinct from all others. Whether this is the case or not, what matters is accounting for this common perception. What is certainly true is that the cultures and behaviours of the people in these industries, the professional relationships and dynamic interplays, are very different. Within the industries decisions are prescribed by subtle dynamics which operate alongside the obvious financial and logistic transactions. If we are to stimulate change it is important to understand how we can best deploy the human element: it uniquely informs each touring realm and our ambition to alter a complex supply chain means pulling the right levers of influence; to maximise power relationships we need to be aware of where they are. For example, in commercial band touring successful artists are the definitive force, in theatre it is shared between the work itself and the creative interpreters; with orchestras it is the forces of repertoire and management.

Our research legacy will be contingent on whether we manage to draw out common ambitions, issues, and activities, while maintaining the capacity for each industry to tailor and champion environmental priorities internally.

Failure to understand how these ultimately powerful dynamics flow is perhaps why responses from government, science and media are often ineffective and enervating. The assumption that if we focus hard enough on celebrity, regulation or science we will effect a behavioural revolution has proved distinctly shaky. By understanding the science and deploying our creativity in the manner in which we consider best we are much more likely to shape regulation as it will affect us.

A word on expectations: this piece is only a start. It looks at core touring activities: the movement of people and product and how that translates into the generation of greenhouse gases. Touring doesn't have the advantage of fixed or stable data gathering points, such as gas or electricity meters, repetitive work patterns, a predictable or permanent work force, or easy access to information about audience travel. There were things we had to remove from our initial scope: notably show power demand and some festival tours and all three industries share a common deficit: available data. Too much of our time was spent doing basic detective work.

We want to track environmental performance and use it in policy, planning and industry intelligence, so where there is relevant data that is in our mutual best interests it makes sense to share it.

We have avoided comparisons across sectors because the scale of activity and audience generally corresponds to the emissions profiles: international touring generates the most emissions

because distances are vast and people tend to fly. Similarly, the emissions produced by bands far exceed orchestras and theatres, but so do their audiences.

While there are some pioneering examples of leadership we are, as a community, short on vision and long on doubt. We need to take a few priorities and commit to them. Only large-scale will do, action at the margins is simply not enough. We are suggesting that we begin with the actions that can command the broadest assent and achieve the quickest results. So we propose beginning with four core, principled, priorities:

1. Get to know the issue, engage with energy and environmental issues.
2. Measure your impacts: understanding what the carbon profile of touring is the first step towards managing it.
3. Identify what you can do to reduce your impacts, support 'green' products and activities to help shift markets.
4. Talk about it, disclose your impacts, invigorate the issue, talk to your artists and audiences, be accountable. We all want to avoid suspicions of greenwash.

Finally we would be missing a trick if we failed to bring into the narrative the art itself: the song, the play, the piece. Whatever other factors are at work – including taste – the art is what brings us together and what shapes the industries. We cannot ask artists to 'do' climate change but we can help those artists who choose to make climate change and the environment a part of their work.

Good outcomes ultimately require trust, transparency, accountability and cooperation on a grand scale – in other words, good governance. We have to stop being parochial as it relates to the comfort of art forms and national boundaries, and scale up our ambition.

This research is a heartfelt appeal to the touring industries to be sure-footed and assertive in your environmental responses. With good will and determination our recommendations will become standard practice and the research itself can be archived. Until then I hope that it is, above all, useful, and helps free that palpable but paralysed energy that has characterised our research encounters over the last nine months. Over 300 people have contributed to this research: we all need to look back and know that it has been worth it.



Alison Tickell
Director, Julie's Bicycle

Overall Summary Findings for Bands, Orchestras and Theatre

Touring greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of performing arts:

- Bands = c 85,000 t CO₂e
- Orchestras = c 8,600 t CO₂e
- Theatre = c 13,400 t CO₂e

Figure 1 Initial values of the GHG emissions *per band performance* by each size by region, in tonnes CO₂e

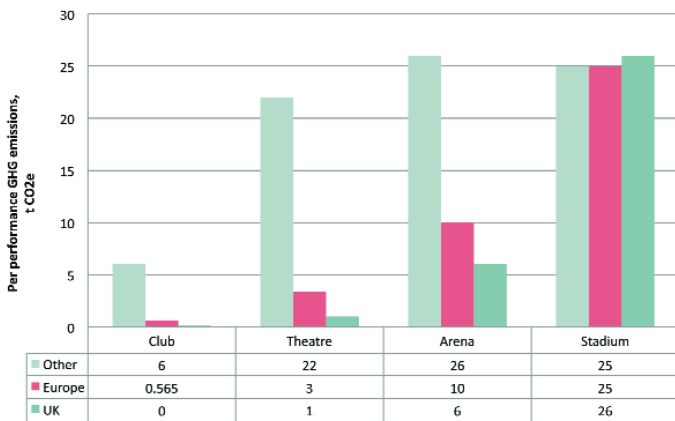
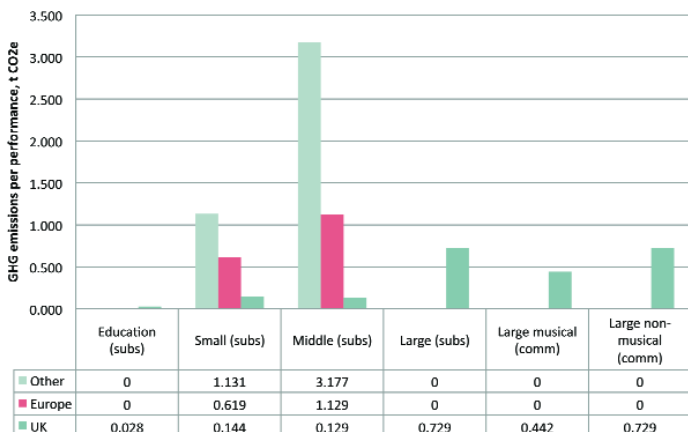


Figure 2 Initial values of the GHG emissions *per orchestra performance* by each size by region, in tonnes CO₂e



Figure 3 Initial values of the GHG emissions produced *per theatre performance* by production scale by region, in tonnes CO₂e



Concluding observations

This study has found that touring bands, orchestras and theatres have not systematically embedded environmental considerations into touring practices. They are at the start of the process of engaging, measuring, reducing and communicating their efforts to improve the environmental performance of touring. We found professionals across the sector are willing and committed to take action, but need guidance on the priorities and support in taking actions.

General recommendations

Touring productions

- Embed environmental sustainability into tour planning.
- Create demand for goods with strong environmental credentials.
- Scope the GHG emissions when planning a tour.
- Measure the GHG emissions after the tour.
- Report the GHG emissions produced from touring.
- Calculate the environmental damage of a tour by pricing these impacts.

The business supply chain

- Venues embed environmental sustainability into operations and investment plans.
- Suppliers invest in and offer customers goods with strong environmental credentials.
- Funders require as condition of funding measurement of GHG emissions.
- Membership organisations disseminate information on environmental action to members and communicate the concerns of members to relevant stakeholders.

Collective action

- Collection and analysis of environmental statistics on live performance sector.
- Provision of environmental training to develop knowledge, expertise and skills.
- Commit to a small number of joint priority actions across the sector.
- Fast-track environmental innovation for the performing arts sector.