CHAPTER 9

Presenters and Presenting Organizations

ALTHOUGH THIS BOOK FOCUSES ON THE PROCESS of producing theatrical productions, there are literally thousands of theatres and administrators who concern themselves almost exclusively with presenting productions that have been produced by others. These people are called *presenters*.

Theatrical presenters come in all shapes and sizes—from nonprofit presenting organizations, such as city-supported performing arts centers, state-supported university theatres, community-supported resident theatres, civic centers, museums, student organizations, religious organizations, libraries, and community centers, to commercial-presenting organizations, such as theatre landlords, Broadway series presenters, independent promoters, casinos, and nightclubs. The administrators of such theatrical presenting organizations, whether not-for-profit or commercial, are known by a wide variety of titles including presenter, president, executive director, sponsor, vice-president of programming, or owner.

So who supplies these theatrical presenters with shows, concerts, and performances? The answer—producers. (See Chapters 4 and 5.) Producers also come in a variety of sizes from nonprofit producers, such as regional theatres, dance companies, opera companies, and ballet troupes, to Broadway entrepreneurs, limited liability corporations, and large publicly traded entertainment corporations. More often than not, producers hire representatives to manage and distribute their work to theatrical presenters. These representatives include booking agents, general managers, personal managers, company managers, and other production companies.

There are several points that should be made clear at the outset about theatrical presenting:

1.) Many theatrical presenters sponsor all types of performing arts events, including Broadway musicals and plays, dance performances, music concerts, lecture series, celebrity acts, and multicultural programs.

2.) Administrators of presenting organizations must be particularly skilled in marketing, finance, personnel supervision in addition to having a broad and current understanding of the various performing arts disciplines. Presenters at not-for-profit organizations must also have a keen understanding of fundraising and managing a board of trustees.

3.) Some of the larger and more ambitious presenting organizations may occasionally commission and produce a production that is included among their presentations. (See Chapter 5, Commissions.)

4.) Some of the producers who supply product to various presenters are themselves presenters.

To untangle this seemingly contradictory branch of show business, let's consider how it started.

Background

The First Presenters: 1830-1900

The American tradition of presenting live entertainment that has been produced by others can be traced back to the lyceum bureaus, the Chautauquas, and various theatre circuits that fostered touring stars and companies during the nineteenth century. Touring has been a fundamental part of the presenting process since the system began.

Popular for several decades prior to the Civil War, lyceum groups disseminated information for adults about history, politics, science, and the arts by offering lectures, concerts, and other presentations. The lyceum bureau in a given community would select which speakers and events to offer. Derived from a French word meaning "school" and from a Greek word meaning "gymnasium," such as the one in which Aristotle taught in ancient Athens, American-style lyceums gained respectability during the 1830s—even in such puritanical cities as Boston. In fact, in many communities a lyceum or "musee" offered the only theatre or dance presented, usually under a pious-sounding title that promised instruction rather than, heaven forbid, entertainment. Theatre performances, for example, might have been Shakespearean tragedies rearranged to illustrate a moral lesson, and "dance" recitals were often little more than a series of *tableaux vivants* in which well-draped performers stood stock-still to depict some edifying historical moment, real or imagined.

Chautauqua institutions, like the lyceums, were devoted to adult education in both religious and secular subjects. The first Chautauqua was established in upstate New York in 1874 as a summer activity, and thousands attended this eight-week event, taking courses in religion, arts, and humanities. Chautauqua publications were written to accommodate groups of people who could not attend the institute, and lecturers were sent on the road to enhance their literature. Eventually, several hundred Chautauqua institutes were formed around the country, and each engaged speakers, musicians, and various types of entertainment. In 1912, the movement was organized as a commercial enterprise: entertainers and speakers were offered on a contractual basis, touring circuits were formed, and the system enjoyed considerable popularity until the mid-1920s.

While the advent of Chautauquas encouraged the careers of local promoters and community lyceum (or booking) bureaus, they were a comparatively unsophisticated forerunner of today's professional presenting organizations. The participants of a Chautauqua program traveled together by train and the event, comprised of both lectures and entertainments, usually took place in a tent—resembling something between a revival meeting and a country fair. However, parallel with the growth of the Chautauqua movement was the growth in popularity of the touring combination companies, organized to present full-length theatrical productions with professional actors, including a number of stars from England and the continent. These troupes also traveled by rail, but they performed in permanent theatre buildings that had been vacated by resident companies forced out by the demand for visiting stars and companies. In essence, landlords of such theatres became presenters, dependent upon the offerings put together by booking agencies in New York City.

Aside from the theatre managers on the road and the booking/producing agencies in New York City, there was also a kind of hybrid promoter/presenter known as an impresario. One pioneer in the art of promoting, touring, and presenting on a grand scale was Phineas T. Barnum, who in the 1850s made a fortune managing the American tour of the Swedish singer Jenny Lind. Barnum proved there was a vast American market for foreign attractions and unusual spectacles. In the 1890s, after failing as a theatre operator, a German emigrant named William Morris opened the performers' agency that still bears his name and also served as a leading booking agency for vaudeville acts. Morris thus established a link between artist representation and booking that is still practiced. Impresarios of later times purveyed offerings that were somewhat more refined, but their taste for profit was equally keen: Florenz Ziegfeld, Billy Rose, and the quintessential impresario of the twentieth century, Sol Hurok. Yet impresarios are a breed apart; they usually combine the functions of booking and presenting and, therefore, do not share profits or losses with another party. The day of the impresario may well have passed, however, and it is now rare to find the functions of both booking and presenting in one operation, either on an individual level or at a corporate level: bookers book and presenters present.

Booking and Producing Monopolies: 1900–1955

Given the uncertainties of travel, as well as a general attitude of mistrust, the first booking offices often made simultaneous engagements; local theatre managers would then book two or three attractions for the same date to cover themselves. These practices caused a chaotic situation that was partially addressed when three New York booking offices joined forces in 1900 to form the Theatrical Syndicate; they soon controlled most of the nation's legitimate theatres and bookings. A similar situation developed in the field of vaudeville.

Starting in the 1880s vaudeville became an immensely popular form of entertainment. It consisted of unrelated songs, sketches, and acts, or what we call today a variety show. Its end, officially or not, came about when the Palace Theatre in New York became a motion picture house. A number of different vaudeville circuits, each comprised of a string of theatres, were eventually absorbed into the Keith-Albee circuit, just as legitimate theatres fell under Syndicate control. The vaudeville monopoly did business out of B. F. Keith's United Booking Office (UBO), which was managed by E. F. Albee, whose adopted grandson is the playwright Edward Albee.

By the time the Shubert Brothers began to gain prominence both as producers and theatre landlords, theatre production in America was on the decline. By the mid-1920s, the Shuberts had secretly become a majority shareholder of UBO and controlled well over half of all legitimate theatre bookings in the nation. They also produced about twenty percent of all road shows. By the early 1950s, they had gained control of virtually all theatres still operating outside of New York City, and the UBO had become their central booking office. Even when they merely booked a theatre, they took as much as fifty percent of the box office; and when box office receipts fell below a minimum, they simply booked in a new attraction and avoided any serious loss.

Organized Audience Support: 1920–1960

Methods for organizing audience support on the road—as opposed to organizing control over theatres and bookings—were pioneered during the 1920s in the theatrical field when the Theatre Guild invented a subscription plan that guaranteed support for its productions. Aside from being the dominant producing company on Broadway during the 1920s and 1930s, the Guild could boast 30,000 subscribers in cities outside New York. In the concert field, two far-sighted promoters in Chicago, Dema Harshburger and Ward French, came up with a subscription plan that was eventually adopted by thousands of local music clubs. A permanent, nonprofit concert association in each city ran an intensive, annual, one-week membership drive that was directed by a professional organizer. The money raised became the budget for that year's attractions. Single admissions were not sold, and only members could attend the concerts. The plan was first tried in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1920; by 1930 it had been successfully introduced in numerous cities and its operation became centralized when the two leading artist management organizations of the day, Columbia Concerts Inc. and National Artists Service, gave it both financial and artistic support.

Until the early 1990s Columbia Artists Management, Inc. included the Community Concerts division that packaged artists and ensembles for most of the community concert series throughout the country, particularly in small communities that presented four to six events annually. Over the years, community concerts provided countless soloists and ensembles while serving as a highly successful inspiration for the development of subscription audiences in all branches of the performing arts. In a later decade, the Ford Foundation became so convinced that subscription audiences were the key to a stable performing arts economy, that it hired a special consultant, Danny Newman, to help a number of nonprofit companies develop a ticket sales plan. This plan is outlined in his book *Subscribe Now!* Following the demise of the community concerts division of Columbia Artists, efforts to replicate the idea were not successful and artists began to be represented by boutique agencies, many of whom specialized in a specific arts discipline such as jazz, classic solo recital, chamber music ensembles. The 1990s also saw a decrease nationally in the number of local community concert series as the population increasingly gravitated to the popular musical arts or Broadway type productions.

The history of theatrical road tours was abruptly altered in 1955 when the federal government began its antitrust action against the Shuberts. By the next year, the courts put an end to the Shuberts' monopoly by forcing them both to sell a number of their theatres and also to stop operating the United Booking Office. When that office was closed in 1956, it created a wide-open opportunity in the theatre industry. Several groups jumped into action, notably the League of New York Theatres and Producers (League); the Legitimate Independent Theatres of North America (LITNA), a group of theatre managers from outside New York City; and Columbia Artists Management, Inc. (CAMI).

The League incorporated the Independent Booking Office (IBO) in 1956 as a central booking office for touring legit shows. The hope was that all theatre owners and operators would join IBO, but instead, LITNA attempted to conduct its own booking activities. It charged five percent of the gross box office receipts as its booking fee, while IBO introduced a rather modest flat fee to be paid both by the presenter and the producer. In 1957 after inevitable conflicts, the two organizations consolidated their booking interests under the IBO banner. It served the road business by booking and contracting shows as well as collecting and sharing pertinent information with its client theatres. There were twenty board members, ten from the League and ten from LITNA. While the number of playing weeks on the road fluctuated widely in the 1960s and 1970s, IBO continued to function primarily as a booking agency until the early 1980s, when its main work evolved into serving as a computerized national clearing-house for performing arts touring information. In 1985, however, IBO was dissolved, and its assets were transferred to the League for the purpose of forming a professional resource center to assist producers and presenters both on Broadway and the road. To reflect this change in its membership and services to the industry, the League of New York Theatres and Producers became the League of American Theatres and Producers, a national membership organization, not a booking agency.

In 1955, just twenty-five years after the founding of IBO by Arthur Judson, CAMI, anticipating the demise of IBO, created the Columbia Artists Theatricals Corporation

(CATC). Modeled after Community Concerts, CATC maintained a professional central staff in New York to work with volunteers in seventy-eight cities—these volunteers were people who were members of such service organizations as the Junior League. Each volunteer group was comprised of a nucleus of members who chaired committees dealing with finance, publicity, venue rental, hospitality, and, of course, subscription sales. Each member was expected to bring ten other volunteers into the organization to assist with sales. Prior to each season of four productions that CATC sent on the road—typically, there would be two musicals, a comedy, and either a serious drama or a mystery—a representative from the New York office would visit each city. The season would be announced at an annual dinner.

CATC's primary responsibility to its local constituents was to contract the services of producers who would organize the four productions each year and provide the volunteer presenters with the necessary support material and information. In 1958 Ronald Wilford was invited into CAMI as general manager of this network or circuit of theatrical presenters, known at this time as the Broadway Theatre Alliance—later renamed the Broadway Theatre League. CATC never intended to produce its own productions, although it was eventually forced into this activity to fulfill its commitments. Perhaps because of such complications, CATC, in 1961, sold its interest in the national subscription series to an independent producer, Harlowe Dean, and became a temporarily dormant corporation. After a single season, the Broadway Theatre League was acquired by Julian Olney, who renamed it the National Performing Arts Company. By the mid-1960s, however, the circuit members no longer paid annual fees to a central booking agency and were free to develop their own series. For the first time in the history of touring in America, the road became decentralized. Individual presenters were free to pick and choose attractions from the agencies or producers they chose.

Diversity and Expansion: 1965–Present

A significant factor in the decentralization and growth of the road was the construction of thousands of new performing arts facilities in the 1960s and 1970s, most on college and university campuses. As these were often too lavish and expensive to maintain for student use alone, the universities opened their doors to professional performing arts presentations of every kind in order to generate needed revenues. As a result, the campus often became the cultural center of its community. And, predictably, many new booking agencies and producers anxious to cash in on a widening national audience sprang into operation.

In 1965 Tom Mallow founded American Theatre Productions (ATP) and quickly became preeminent in the theatrical touring market. Mallow worked closely with local promoters and presenters without attempting to centralize road management. Then ATP created a subsidiary corporation, Janco Productions, which served as the production arm of its booking operation, thus eliminating the middleman position of the booking agency and strengthening conrol over both product and contract flexibility. By 1970, ATP was virtually the sole bidder for the touring rights to Broadway shows. Shortly thereafter, however, CAMI decided to revive its theatrical touring activities, in part because it happened to own the touring rights to the Tony Award-winning musical, *1776*. Kenneth Olsen, who had worked with Tom Mallow at ATP, was recruited to head CATC and soon revitalized its reputation by importing such prestigious companies as The Young Vic, The Royal Shakespeare Company, and the Cómedie-Française, while also vying for the rights to New York hit shows.

In the mid-1980s the advent of the mega-musical had a major impact on touring productions. *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Les Míserables* led the way and helped increase theatre attendance and subscription audiences all over the country. Alan Wasser Associates (AWA) was founded to manage these productions in New York and book them for the road. AWA continues to be one of the primary general management and booking agencies for road product. Shortly thereafter, Disney Theatricals was founded to produce *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Aida* for the New York stage and for national tours. These mega-musicals resulted in a change in the usual one- or two-week runs in major cities to eight- to twelve-week runs—and often longer—and required two to three weeks for load-in and restoration.

As Broadway product and the demand for that product increased throughout the 1990s, a number of booking agencies were founded to handle the demand, many of them also being involved with the original production of the shows for the Broadway stage. As the new century started, the primary booking agencies for Broadway theatricals included Big League Theatricals, The Booking Group, Columbia Artists Theatricals, Disney Theatricals, Dodger Touring Limited, On The Road, The Road Company, AWA Touring Services—the booking agency arm of Alan Wasser Associates—and William Morris Agency. Like virtually all booking agencies and producers of touring productions, these are commercial, for-profit outfits, even though they often sell their products to nonprofit presenting organizations.

Most, although not all, producers of touring productions and booking agencies are members of the League of American Theatres and Producers. As discussed in Chapter 4, this organization negotiates with Actors' Equity Association and other theatrical unions.

Non-Equity Tours

Until the mid-1990s, the only tours playing major markets were full union tours. The actors were members of Actors' Equity Association, and the balance of the company, musicians, and stage crew were members of their respective unions, AFM and IATSE, SSDC. (See Chapter 3.) The producers of these Equity tours were typically the original producers —members of the League of American Theatres and Producers—and because they had agreements with all the appropriate theatrical unions, they were accordingly bound to engage union personnel—read Equity—for their tours. The appropriate Equity contract for a tour would be the Broadway Production Contract.

Non-Equity tours played one-nighters and split weeks and were ostensibly below the radar. Producers of non-Equity tours, obviously had no Equity agreement, but did have agreements with other theatrical unions. And so, there were two separate touring worlds: Equity and non-Equity.

However, those two worlds were moving closer together. League producers needed to cut costs because presenters were reducing their guarantees. The League's response was to look to non-Equity performers as a cost-savings device. (Equity claimed that the real issue for producers was not so much a response to reduced guarantees, but simply an attempt to make more money at the expense of its members.) Whatever their reasons, League producers, unable to engage non-Equity performers themselves because of their existing agreements, *licensed* their shows to non-Equity producers or repackagers, such as NetWorks, Troika Productions, and Phoenix Productions to begin playing major markets. The repackagers could put out tours and operate them less expensively because they used modified union agreements and also because they used revised light plots, redesigned set pieces and scenery, and virtual orchestras—computers that simulated the sound of live musicians, thus reducing the number of touring players, if not eliminating them entirely. In short, they attempted to replicate a Broadway production at substantially reduced costs. Although there was a large economic advantage to using non-Equity performers, they could not use excellent Equity performers because these actors were barred from working in non-Equity productions. Therefore, production quality varied from show to show.

Equity needed to get its members back on tour, and so during the 2004 Equity-League contract negotiations, an experimental "tiered" agreement was reached that allowed Equity performers to work for wages and benefits below those normally required under the Production Contract. That agreement imposed conditions on the producers: the guarantee received by producers had to be below an agreed amount, the tour could not play in one city for more than a certain number of weeks, and there had to be a minimum of forty people in the company. Because of this agreement forged between the League and Equity, Troika and NetWorks have now signed pacts with Equity as well.

Presenters' Organizations

Formerly the Association of College, University and Community Arts Administrators (ACUCAA), the Association of Performing Arts Presenters (APAP), headquartered in Washington, D.C., has the largest national membership for managers and administrators in the presenting field. It holds an annual conference in New York City, provides workshops there and at other locations around the country, and supports research and publication.

APAP members bring performances to over two million audience-goers each week (www.artspresenters.org/about/index.cfm). No other association membership rivals the breadth of creative expression, representing disciplines ranging from all forms of dance, music, theatre, and family programming to puppetry, circus, magic attractions, and performance art.

The National Association for Campus Activities (NACA) and the International Society of Performing Arts Administrators (ISPA) also represent presenters; the latter having an international membership and holding conferences both in the U.S. and abroad.

Regional associations and consortia devoted largely to management issues and block-booking for presenting organizations include Southern Arts Federation, in Atlanta; New England Foundation for the Arts, in Boston; Arts Midwest, in Minneapolis; Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, in Baltimore; Western States Arts Federation, in Denver; Consortium for Pacific Arts and Cultures, in Honolulu; and CAPACOA, in Ontario. Most of these organizations hold an annual conference for members in their regions, which offer seminars on areas of interest in presenting the arts and resource/exhibit halls where the agencies display their offerings and book upcoming seasons. Many states also have consortium organizations, such as the Montana Performing Arts Consortium, Arts Northwest, and the Ohio Arts Presenters Network, which meet to discuss current issues in the presenting world and to block book attractions.

Until the 1970s few funding agencies regarded nonprofit presenting organizations as eligible for grants; most awards went directly to the artists and not-for-profit producing companies. The NEA, state arts councils, and other granting entities came to realize that without the theatres, audiences, and fees provided by presenting organizations, few ongoing performing arts companies could survive. About one-third of most presenting organizations' budgets is spent on artist fees. Commercial presenters are not eligible to receive grants or contributions.

By the 1980s, the business of presenting theatre and other types of performances had become a major part of the entertainment industry. The nation's sprawling performing arts centers, from Lincoln Center to the Kennedy Center to the Los Angeles Music Center, had become the jewels in what is a very impressive "presentation" crown sitting atop the performing arts colossus in America.

Types of Theatrical Tours

Touring was invented as a means of increasing audiences and revenues for productions beyond what they could attract by staying in one place. Let's look at the current type of tours that make up theatrical presentations.

National Tour

Also called a first national company or a first-class touring production, the national tour of a New York production that has received critical acclaim or audience interest is usually sent on the road concurrent with the New York run or immediately after its close. It is almost always organized and controlled by the original New York producers. If one of these producers is the Shubert or Nederlander organization, which owns theatres in New York and several major cities, the first national company or companies may be obliged to play these cities first. Similarly, if one of the producers is Clear Channel Entertainment (now Live Nation), the production will play these venues first because of the large number of markets it books and/or controls. The same holds true with the group of presenters known as the Independent Presenters Network (IPN).

National companies are generally booked into theatres according to one of two schemes:

1.) *Open-ended run*: The production will continue at the theatre as long as it earns a minimum weekly amount at the box office, similar to how a Broadway theatre license works, or continues to run profitably. This arrangement works only in large metropolitan areas and is increasingly uncommon. Open-ended runs are generally restricted to shows that fall into the mega-musical category, such as *The Phantom of the Opera*, *The Lion King*, or *Wicked*.

2.) *Fixed run*: The production is booked into a theatre for a specific, limited run, usually ranging from one to twenty-six weeks in length. Like the open-ended run, fixed runs are mostly in big cities, usually for very popular musicals or star-driven plays.

Bus and Truck Tour

A bus and truck tour may also be called the second or third national company. The ***bus and truck tour*** derived its name from the tradition of transporting the performers by chartered bus and the scenery and costumes by truck(s). Today, several buses—and occasionally commercial air carriers—are used to transport the actors, musicians, and stagehands; two to eight trucks are generally used to haul the scenery, wardrobe, lighting rig, sound package, and goods. Such companies are booked into venues for fixed runs according to one of three schemes:

1.) *One-week to two-week runs*: These might be in cities such as Seattle or St. Louis or even larger cities like Boston or Chicago.

2.) *Split-week runs*: The production plays in two to three venues during the same week, usually in such secondary markets as Kalamazoo or Scranton.

3.) *One-nighters*: One or two performances in a single day, in still-smaller, tertiary markets like Lima, Ohio, or Sioux City, Iowa.

As mentioned already, a major shift has occurred in touring shows since the early 2000s with the growth of nonunion touring companies. In addition, playing schedules in various cities have changed, and although the one-week to two-week formula still holds, it is increasingly common for the non-Equity tour to play for one, two, or more weeks in any given market. It all depends on how many weeks a market can realistically support a show, whether it be a new title fresh from Broadway or a new production of a revival.

When there is only one company on the road—either Equity or non-Equity—it will usually play four weeks in a major city, two weeks in a mid-size city such as St. Louis, and one week in a smaller city such as Louisville. Most tours start with an Equity first national company, and, after exhausting the roster of the full-week markets, will often be remounted as a smaller production to play the split weeks, and finally adjusted down to play one-nighters. By the time a show gets to the one-night circuit it is almost certainly nonunion.

International Productions

First-class productions of Broadway hits outside the United States may be organized and controlled by the original producers, or more likely be licensed to local producers in non-U.S. cities. These occur in foreign capitals and either employ U.S. performers or citizens of those nations. Sometimes, fully American productions are sent to foreign territories as part of the U.S. touring schedule. The engagements in foreign parts are always for a fixed run. Occasionally, U.S. tours are hosted in foreign territories as part of a cultural exchange program or as part of an international festival.

Company-Booked Tours/Shared Tours

LORT theatres and dance companies sometimes organize limited tours or support special small or junior troupes that perform for school and community audiences. Most companies whose mission is to perform for young audiences tour regularly; similarly there are professional repertory companies for adult audiences such as The Acting Company and The Tyrone Guthrie Theater.

American Ballet Theatre and the David Parsons Company are two of several hundred professional dance companies that operate their own in-house booking departments to sell and manage annual tours for both the U.S. and international markets. A slight variation of the company-booked tour is the shared tour. In this example, a group or consortium of producers will mount a show with the support of its members. Many of these are the CLO's (Civic Light Opera companies) such as those in Pittsburgh, Sacramento, Atlanta, and Houston. In these, the producers and presenters are the same entities. They each take on a pro-rata share of the pre-production expenses, pay the relevant weekly operating expenses, and each keeps its box office revenues. The shared tour model is often used for mounting revivals.

Types of Venues

When you first attended a theatrical production, chances are it was mounted in a community theatre, high school auditorium, or school gymnasium. Theatres exist as gathering places for people to come together and share a common experience. But that experience can happen in different types of venues.

Commercial Road Houses

Theatres in this category are the backbone of touring theatre. They are usually considered legitimate theatres in large markets outside of New York City. They include the Forrest in Philadelphia, the Colonial in Boston, the Cadillac Palace in Chicago, the Curran in San Francisco, and the Pantages in Los Angeles. These venues book shows on their way to Broadway and shows that have been Broadway hits. Engagements in these theatres range from two weeks to six months or even longer and generally represent the first national company of a tour.

Major Performing Arts Centers

Multifacility performing arts centers such as the Los Angeles Music Center, Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, or the Orange County Performing Arts Center may be owned by a municipality and leased to a nonprofit operating corporation. They may have constituent performing arts companies—symphony orchestras or opera companies—in residence, but operate as presenters at least part of the time. They may also make their facilities available to outside groups with fixed runs of one to six weeks. These venues often host bus and truck touring companies.

College and University Performance Facilities

Campus facilities may be large performing arts complexes equipped with state-of-the-art technical systems. The Krannert Center at the University of Illinois is this type of complex. An example of a more modest, single-use theatre is the Spingold at Brandeis University. Most are used for both student productions and in-house booked professional attractions. These venues generally book one to two nights of Broadway shows, family, music, and dance attractions. The exceptions are the larger universities, such as Arizona State University and the University of Texas at Austin, that book week-long engagements of touring Broadway musicals.

Mixed-Use Commercial Facilities

Gambling casinos and hotels in Atlantic City or Las Vegas, or the Mohegan Sun or Foxwoods in Connecticut are famous for their lavish entertainment. Las Vegas has become a small center for either sit-down or open-ended Broadway musicals, albeit often in abbreviated form, called a *tab version*. *Tabs* are presented so that customers can see a show and then get back to gambling.

Although one would not consider Cirque du Soleil legitimate theatre, it certainly has made an impact on the entertainment front in Las Vegas, with five different shows currently running. Other musicals that have played or are now playing, in either full-length or tab versions are *Mamma Mia*, *Hairspray*, *Chicago*, and *The Phantom of the Opera*. They typically sit down in Las Vegas for months at a time.

Festivals

There are several hundred annual performing arts festivals in the United States and Canada, including the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Chicago International Theatre Festival, and the Stratford Festival in Canada. These may operate as producers or presenters or both. Internationally, there are thousands of such festivals, and American artists and companies are becoming increasingly involved with them.

Civic Centers, Auditoriums, Halls, and Other Facilities

Built by a city or county and operated with civic funds, these facilities are usually part of a civic complex and service a variety of functions: town meetings, conventions, public performances produced by amateur groups, or professional performances booked in by local promoters or community arts bureaus. These can also include older theatres and former movie palaces that have been purchased by the city, restored, and now operate under city jurisdiction or as a not-for-profit organization.

Public School Facilities

Many auditoriums, gymnasiums, and cafeterias in public schools are used for student activities, as well as for community meetings and public performances.

Mixed-Use Noncommercial Facilities

Hospitals, clinics, libraries, community centers, senior centers, museums, war memorials, multicultural centers, religious facilities, and social-service clubs often make their buildings available for both amateur and professional performances, especially in small or developing communities.

In addition to these types of venues there are many others. Any given venue might be right for one attraction and completely wrong for another. Matching the attraction to the venue is an essential part of presenting.

The Presenter

The presenter must perform a sophisticated juggling act: selecting programs and productions that will satisfy the local audience artistically and make some sense financially. More juggling is required in regard to contracting the attraction, renting the theatre, setting up the box office and phone rooms, arranging for local publicity, placing local advertising, greeting the artists, and finally settling the finances with the producer. Plus, an opening night reception for the company is a nice extra that presenters often organize.

The Local Scene

The presenter must know that a particular performance space is available and must also know its exact seating and production specifications. In addition, the presenter must be very familiar with the audience and its financial potential. Obviously, this is easiest with experience and when there is a subscription audience, which guarantees a financial base at the outset of an engagement. Knowing what the scale of ticket prices will be—and whether or not this may be raised or lowered to suit particular attractions—means knowing the gross potentials for each performance or series of performances. Finally, the presenter must have a close approximation of all the expenses required to operate the venue and manage the season. Only when armed with this information is the presenter ready to begin negotiating.

Presenter Responsibilities

The presenter usually furnishes and pays for all the local facilities, services, and personnel required to present the production locally. Specifically this can entail the following:

1.) Enter into a theatre lease, providing use of the theatre, which will be clean, fully staffed, and supplied with appropriate heat and/or air-conditioning. The stage and orchestra pit must be cleared and ready for the production.

2.) Pay the salaries of local stagehands, wardrobe attendants, security personnel, teamsters, loaders, and forklift operators for the take-in, performances, and take-out.

3.) Pay the salaries of local musicians required for rehearsals and performances. In some cases the producer will bring a few orchestra members so the presenter will have to pay for only the local players.

4.) Pay for theatre ushers, ticket takers, house manager, security and medical staff, cleaners, and other theatre personnel.

5.) Other special arrangements specific to a given production including quick-change booths, sufficient hemp, counterweights, and pipe. Also, the production usually requires the use of washing machines and clothes dryers.

6.) The presenter must also set up the box office at least four to eight weeks in advance of the first performance. This includes scaling the house and negotiating box office commission structures. In addition, the presenter must pay for all the costs associated with the operation of the box office—telephone charge sales, website, subscription sales, and group sales.

7.) Pay for a local press agent and marketing staff.

8.) Purchase or trade advertising time on television and radio outlets and secure space in the print media. The producer often provides generic copy, layouts, and commercials, which are localized for the specific market by the presenter.

9.) Comply with all terms of the Technical Rider (see Appendix J).

10.) Provide a printed program free of charge to every member of the audience.

For each attraction, it is essential that the presenter has a good understanding of and is able to maintain a complete record of the projected costs and income. This is best accomplished by keeping a form that details all of the expected expenses and the income potential so that the two can be compared to see if the attraction is going to be viable.

The following is an example of the type of report that can be useful in contract negotiations:

Event *Pro Forma*

The *Pro Forma* puts all costs and income for a single event on one page and allows one to manipulate the various items in determining the financial feasibility of an event. All costs associated with the event are on the left side of the page and all income items are on the right side. There is a column for including the "actual cost" following the event. This is historically valuable in looking at future events of the same type. Here are some definitions of each category on the Pro Forma:

Projected Expenses

ARTIST/PRODUCER FEES

Fee, Performance
Negotiated fee amount per the contract with booking agency
Fee, Education
An amount that the artist may require to provide involvement in arts education activity
Lodging
Cost of hotel accommodations that may be required by artist
Transportation
Cost of airfare and local limo service that may be required by artist
Artist, Other
Any other costs associated directly with artist

HOUSE COSTS

Stage Rental
Cost to rent the theatre
Equipment Rental
Cost to rent special equipment needed for this show, such as house sound and lights or extra washer and dryers
Equipment Purchase
Cost of equipment purchase, such as lighting gels and dry ice, etc.
Piano Tuning
The fee paid to the piano tuner, after moving the piano into place
Space Rental
Rental fees for front-of-house spaces, such as lobbies or rehearsal rooms
Ushers/Ticket Takers/Security
Direct cost of ushers, ticket takers, and security
Hospitality
Cost of receptions, postconcert meet & greets, etc.
Flowers/Décor
Costs for stage flowers or decorations, artist finale bouquets
Special Services
Baby-sitting, chiropractor, medical services, etc.
Other
Any cost directly associated with the production, such as signed interpreters

PRODUCTION LABOR

Stagehands
Estimated cost of stagehands, wardrobe attendants, and loaders for load-in, load-out, and running show, based on the artist/production technical rider
Musicians
Local musicians needed, based on the artist/production technical rider

SERIES MARKETING

Season Promotion
Pro-rata share of season brochures, design, printing, and mailing; these costs are usually reimbursed through a box office commission
Box Office Set-up
The cost to program the ticketing system for ticket sales, plus the cost of ticket stock
Programs
The cost, if any, of producing a program for patrons; display advertising often covers these costs

ADVERTISING AND PUBLICITY

Advertising

Direct cost of all media advertising (print, radio, television) including costs to create the ads, add voice-overs to radio and television spots, plus direct mail and promos; this is often a separate budget with a detailed breakout of expenditures

Placement Commission

Agency or in-house fees or salary to develop materials, place advertising buys, and negotiate in-kind advertising

Publicity

Costs to create press kits, duplicate photos, and releases, plus car service for actor interviews

BOX OFFICE

Telephone

Fees charged by credit card companies for purchases over the telephone

Subscriptions

A percentage of the series subscription ticket that contributes to series marketing

Credit Card Charges

Fees charged by credit card companies for purchases at the box office

Group Sales

A percentage of group sales that contributes to the overhead costs of group sales personnel

TOTAL EXPENSES

The total sum of Artists Fees, House Costs, Production Labor, Series Marketing, Advertising and Publicity, and Box Office.

PRESENTER PROFIT

This is a negotiated amount that the presenter may claim as profit after all the show expenses have been paid. In reality, the presenter may have year-long overhead expenses that are not reflected in the event pro forma. This "profit" helps defer these costs.

ROYALTIES

Although this customary deal term due the artists/producer is quoted as a "royalty," in reality it is an amount due the artist and often has little to do with an actual royalty paid to the rights holder.

LEAGUE FEES

This is a fee that the League of American Theatres and Producers charges, usually on a weekly per show basis.

Projected Income

SCALE

This *Pro Forma* provides the option of four different ticket price zones that represent seating in four different areas of the theatre.

SEAT DISTRIBUTION

This is an estimate of the total number of seats sold in each category—series subscriptions, public (nonsubscription), student, and groups. The total number of seats must equal the theatre's capacity.

ESTIMATED GROSS INCOME

This chart multiplies the corresponding Scale and Seat Distribution numbers and multiplies them together to give a dollar value of anticipated sales.

WEEKLY GROSS INCOME

The figure is the total sum of zones A–D, multiplied by the number of performances given in the week.

PROJECTED PERCENTAGE OF HOUSE SOLD

This is a key number. Seldom is every seat sold. In this model we have used an eighty-five percent figure.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF SEATS SOLD PER HOUSE

This figure represents the total house capacity multiplied by the Projected Percentage of House Sold.

PROJECTED NUMBER OF SEATS SOLD PER ENGAGEMENT

This figure represents the Projected Number of Seats multiplied by the number of performances in the week.

ESTIMTED GROSS INCOME

This figure represents the Weekly Gross Potential multiplied by the Projected Percentage of House Sold.

NET INCOME AFTER EXPENSES

This figure is the Estimated Gross Income less the Grand Total of Expenses.

AFTER EXPENSES SPLIT

These percentages are part of the financial terms negotiated with the booking agent. This figure is the split of the Net Income After Expenses.

ESTIMATED TOTAL TO ARTIST/PRODUCER

This figure is the sum of the Artist/Producer Fees, Royalties, and producer's share of After Expense Split.

ESTIMATED TOTAL TO PRESENTER

This figure is the Estimated Gross Income less the Estimated Total to Artist/Producer.

EVENT:	**Broadway Show**	**DATE:**	**April 12 - 17, 2005**
VENUE:	GREAT HALL	**TIME:**	**Broadway Schedule**
AGENCY:	The Agency		**8 performance week**
Contact:	The Agent		
CONTRACT BASIS:	Negotiated		

This proforma is an estimate only based on assumptions relative to performance costs and income.
(NAGBOR: Net Adjusted Gross Box Office Receipts)

PROJECTED EXPENSES	Actual	Budget	
ARTIST / PRODUCER FEES			
Fee: Performance		$ 250,000	
Fee: Education		$ -	
Lodging		$ -	
Transportation		$ -	
Artist Other		$ -	
Subtotal		$ 250,000	
HOUSE COSTS			
Stage Rental		$ 28,000	
Equipment Rental		$ 4,000	
Equipment Purchase		$ 1,000	
Piano Tuning		$ 1,000	
Space Rental		$ 400	
Ushers/TT's/Security		$ 16,000	
Catering/Hospitality		$ 2,500	
Flowers/Decorations		$ -	
Special Services		$ 500	
Other: Interpreters		$ 1,000	
Subtotal		$ 54,400	
PRODUCTION LABOR			
Stagehands/Wardrobe		$ 55,000	
Muscians		$ 12,000	
Subtotal		$ 67,000	
SERIES MARKETING			
Season promo/Subscriptions		$ 10,000	
Box Office Setup		$ 2,600	
Programs		$ 2,000	
		$ 14,600	
ADVERTISING & PUBLICITY			
Advertising, Promos & Prod.		$ 50,000	
Placement Commissions		$ 8,500	
Publicity		$ 2,000	
Subtotal		$ 60,500	
BOX OFFICE COMMISSIONS			
Telephone		$ 10,534	7%
Subscriptions		$ 33,599	12%
Credit Card Charges		$ 2,000	4%
Group Sales		$ 5,814	10%
Subtotal:		$ 51,947	
TOTAL EXPENSES:		$ 498,447	
Presenters Profit		$ 15,000	
Royalties (10% of NAGBOR)		$ 66,239	
League Fees		$ -	
GRAND TOTAL:		$ 579,686	

PROJECTED INCOME	A Series 10% discount	B Public No discount	C Student 20% discount	D Group 10% discount	Total Seats
Scale:					
Zone 1	$ 47.25	$ 52.50	$ 42.00	$ 47.25	
Zone 2	$ 42.75	$ 47.50	$ 38.00	$ 42.75	
Zone 3	$ 38.25	$ 42.50	$ 34.00	$ 38.25	
Zone 4	$ 22.50	$ 25.00	$ 20.00	$ 22.50	
Seat Distribution:					
Zone 1	700	300	0	0	1,000
Zone 2	100	300	0	200	600
Zone 3	100	450	50	0	600
Zone 4	0	100	100	0	200
Total	900	1150	150	200	2,400
Estimated Gross Income:					
Zone 1:	$ 33,075.00	$ 15,750.00	$ -	$ -	
Zone 2:	$ 4,275.00	$ 14,250.00	$ -	$ 8,550	
Zone 3:	$ 3,825.00	$ 19,125.00	$ 1,700.00	$ -	
Zone 4:	$ -	$ 2,500.00	$ 2,000.00	$ -	
TOTAL	$ 41,175.00	$ 51,625.00	$ 3,700.00	$ 8,550	

WEEKLY GROSS POTENTIAL (A+B+C+D)*8 shows			$ 840,400
Projected % of House Sold:			85%
Projected # Seats Sold Per House:			2,040
Projected # Seats Sold Per Engagement			16,320
ESTIMATED GROSS INCOME:			$ 714,340
NET INCOME AFTER EXPENSES:			$ 134,654
AFTER EXPENSES SPLIT	Producer	60%	$ 80,792
	Presenter	40%	$ 53,862
ESTIMATED TOAL TO ARTIST/PRODUCER			
Artist / Producer Fees			$ 250,000
Royalty			$ 66,239
After Expenses Split			$ 80,792
			$ 397,031.63
ESTIMATED TOAL TO PRESENTER			$ 317,308.37

Types of Deal Terms

According to Steven Schnepp, president of AWA Touring Services (www.awatouring-services.com), deal terms for touring musicals and plays come in three structures:

1.) A guarantee deal, plus a "royalty" percentage of box office receipts
2.) A co-promote arrangement
3.) A four-wall arrangement

To analyze which deal is more favorable for each party, one has to look at each deal in the form of a settlement. Assume in all three models that eighty-five percent of the capacity has been sold, which is the same capacity used in the estimates of the Pro Forma.

Guarantee Deal

The deal outlined in the Pro Forma is termed a "$250,000 Guarantee to producer with a ten percent royalty percentage of NAGBOR and a backend split after local expenses of sixty percent to producer, forty percent to presenter." Net Adjusted Gross Box Office Revenue (NAGBOR) is the total gross ticket sales less local and/or state taxes, commissions paid to the presenter for subscription and group sales, and commissions collected by credit card issuers for the use of credit cards either at the box office or in telephone sales.

Here's how the Guarantee deal looks at the postperformance settlement:

In this deal, the producer takes away $414,792—fifty-eight percent of the Gross Income—while the presenter takes $299,548—forty-two percent of the Gross Income. The Guarantee deal is the most common, widely used financial deal for touring Broadway productions. The key advantage of this deal to the producer is that it provides for a secured tour. Because the cities booked on the tour will be paying a Guarantee to the producer, regardless of the number of tickets sold, the producer can count on consistent income over the life of the tour. Within each guarantee payment, there is an amount set aside to repay the capitalization or the start-up costs to mount the tour. By securing a series of Guarantee deals, the producer ensures a stable tour that will most likely repay the capitalization costs to the investors, pay the weekly operating costs of the tour, and provide some profit for the producer. Using this example, if the producer's actual weekly operating costs are $300,000, he or she would make $114,792 and apply that to capitalization costs. If those have already been repaid, then the $114,792 is profit.

In a Guarantee deal, the presenter also benefits from having a stable tour. Once the show has been booked and announced to subscribers and the local media, nothing could be worse than a cancellation. When a show is booked on a Guarantee, a stable tour route prevails, ensuring the production will arrive in each market as scheduled. It also allows the presenter to plan a budget with a fixed package of expenses—"house costs" in the Pro Forma—that usually contains some overhead expense.

GUARANTEE SETTLEMENT

Percent of Capacity	**85%**
GROSS INCOME	**$714,340**
LESS BOX OFFICE COMMISSION TO PRESENTER	($51,947)
NET GROSS BOX OFFICE RECEIPTS (NAGBOR)	**$662,393**
ARTIST/PRODUCER FEES	
Guarantee	$250,000
10% of NAGBOR	$66,239
TOTAL COMPANY GUARANTEE	**$316,239**
HOUSE COSTS	
Rent, Ushers, Electricity	$54,400
	$54,400
PRODUCTION LABOR	
Stagehands & Wardrobe—In / Out / Running	$55,000
Musicians—Rehearsals and Performance	$12,000
	$67,000
ADVERTISING & PUBLICITY	$60,500
	$60,500
TOTAL THEATRE OPERATING COSTS	**$181,900**
TOTAL ENGAGEMENT OPERATING COSTS	**$498,139**
BALANCE TO SPLIT	$164,254
60% Producer	$98,552
40% Presenter	$65,702
	$0
TOTAL PRODUCER SHARE	**$414,792**
% of GROSS INCOME	58%
TOTAL PRESENTER SHARE	**$299,548**
% of GROSS	42%

romote Deal

promote or Co-pro is an arrangement wherein both the presenter and producer the risk in presenting the engagement. In this arrangement, each party estimates

CO-PROMOTE SETTLEMENT

Percent of Capacity	**85%**
GROSS INCOME	**$714,340**
LESS BOX OFFICE COMMISSION TO PRESENTER	($51,947)
NET GROSS BOX OFFICE RECEIPTS (NAGBOR)	**$662,393**
ADVERTISING & PUBLICITY "Off The Top"	$60,500
	$60,500
BALANCE TO SPLIT	$601,893
80% Producer	$481,515
20% Presenter	$120,379
	$0
TOTAL PRODUCER SHARE	**$481,515**
% of GROSS INCOME	67%
TOTAL PRESENTER SHARE	**$232,825**
% of GROSS INCOME	33%

its actual expenses; those expenses are then expressed as a ratio that the parities use to share in the NAGBOR.

In a Co-promote, the presenter customarily pays out of its share all the presentation expenses—the ones listed on the left side of the Pro Forma including box office, house costs, stage hands, and musicians—and the producer pays all the production expenses, such as the salaries of the traveling actors, stagehands and musicians, sets, costumes, and lighting. It is common practice to remove advertising, the presenter's largest single expense, from the presenter's list of expenses. The advertising amount is then, in effect, "taken off the top," thus reducing the NAGBOR. It is from that reduced NAGBOR figure that all splits of box office revenues will be taken.

In the Co-promote deal, the producer walks away with $481,515—sixty-seven percent of the Gross Income—while the presenter takes home $232,825—thirty-three percent of the Gross Income. Notice that the producer is receiving $66,723 more than he did in the Guarantee deal, even though the producer's costs are the same. The risk to the producer is higher in the Co-promote. For the Co-pro, the agreed upon ratio split after advertising that was paid was eighty percent to the producer and twenty percent to the presenter. But what if the agreed upon split was sixty percent to the producer and forty percent to the presenter? The outcome would be $361,136 to the producer and $240,757 to the presenter. Continuing with the example that the producer's actual weekly operating costs are $300,000, in the eighty/twenty split, the producer can apply $181,515 toward the capitalization and profit, while in the sixty/forty example, only $61,136 can be applied. It's all a matter of risk verses reward.

If this is how the deals affect the producer's bottom line, how do the Guarantee and Co-promote deals impact the presenter's bottom line? In the Guarantee deal, the presenter took $299,548. Out of that sum, the presenter paid the local costs to run the attraction including box office staff costs, credit card commissions, ushers, theatre rent, electricity, local stagehands, and local musicians. Plus, the presenter paid expenses not listed on the settlement such as staff overhead and office expenses. Although the presenter collects some reimbursements from the show settlement, not all are covered. Notice, too, that the presenter's Series Marketing budget line from the Pro Forma is not directly reimbursed on the settlements. It's in the presenter's best interest to lower the actual paid-out expenses as much as possible.

In some cases, the presenter may negotiate with the artists that the house costs will be expressed as a fixed amount rather than line-by-line negotiated items; in the Pro Forma example, the house costs fixed amount would be expressed as $54,400. With the fixed house costs negotiated, it is to the presenter's advantage to lower the actual paid-out costs. Those saved monies go directly to the presenter's bottom line. For example, the presenter may take a reimbursement for credit card commissions of five percent, but the deal with the bank that issues the credit cards may only be three percent—the presenter may then apply the two percent difference to improving the bottom line. Further, if the presenter provides the services of an advertising agency in-house, a customary agency commission of fifteen percent is often charged; the commission figure helps defer the year-long presenter costs of maintaining an in-house marketing department.

Four-Wall Deal

In a Four-Wall deal, the producer rents the theatre from the presenter, thereby assuming all financial responsibility for all expenses of both the attraction and the presentation—but keeping all box office revenue.

In a Four-Wall deal the local presenter has no risk, but neither does she or he have the potential for making extra profit. The most money the local presenter can make is the rental figure, plus some minimal mark-up profit from credit card fees and advertising commissions. Under certain circumstances, if the presenter feels that it is an attraction that his audience will want to see, he might well agree to those terms. If a venue hosts a Broadway series for example, the presenter would most likely want to include the latest hot musical from Broadway in the series, and the Four-Wall arrangement might be the only way that a community could see that production. Most "mega-musicals" are presented using the Four-Wall agreement or a variation thereof. "Mega musicals" are shows that are very large and very expensive, but also very good for subscriptions and very good for single ticket sales. Four-Wall deals are typically used for multiweek engagements. However, as mentioned above, the disadvantage to the presenter is the reduced reward, meaning that even if the attraction sells every single ticket, the presenter's share is fixed at the agreed rental figure.

FOUR-WALL SETTLEMENT

Percent of Capacity	**85%**
GROSS INCOME	**$714,340**
LESS BOX OFFICE COMMISSION TO PRESENTER	($51,947)
NET GROSS BOX OFFICE RECEIPTS (NAGBOR)	**$662,393**
HOUSE COSTS	
Rent, Ushers, Electricity	$54,400
PRODUCTION LABOR	
Stagehands & Wardrobe—In / Out / Running	$55,000
Musicians—Rehearsals and Performance	$12,000
	$67,000
ADVERTISING & PUBLICITY	$60,500
	$60,500
TOTAL THEATRE OPERATING COSTS	**$181,900**
BALANCE TO PRODUCER	$480,493
TOTAL PRODUCER SHARE	**$480,493**
% of GROSS INCOME	58%
TOTAL PRESENTER SHARE	**$233,874**
% of GROSS	33%

It is necessary to compare all three deals by viewing them side by side. All start with the same Gross Income figure but end with different results. Note how both the Producer Share and Presenter Share vary. In the Four-Wall example, the riskiest of all deals for the producer, she or he takes away a sum of $480,493—sixty-seven percent of the Gross Income—while the presenter walks away with only $233,847—thirty-three percent of the Gross Income. The Producer's Share is greater than in the Guarantee deal, as expected.

But given its risky nature, why in our examples does the Four-Wall deal produce less money for the producer than the Co-Pro—$480,493 versus $481,515? It all comes down to the percentage (amount) of tickets sold. If in our settlement ninety-five percent of the tickets were sold, rather than eighty-five percent, the Producer's Share of Four-Wall would be *approximately* $564,000 as compared to the Co-Pro share of $548,000. This

COMPARISON OF THREE DEALS

	Guarantee	Co-promote	Four-Wall
PRODUCER	$414,792	$481,515	$480,493
PRESENTER	$299,548	$232,825	$233,847

illustrates that while risky, the Four-Wall deal is best for the producer on a hot-selling show.

On the other hand, because the Producer assumes little to no risk in the Guarantee deal, the reward is substantially less than in the other deals: $414,792 versus $480,493 and $481,515. But low risk for one side is not low risk for the other. The Presenter is the guarantor of the Guarantee to the Producer, and so the Presenter is on the hook for the guaranteed sum, in this case $250,000, regardless of what the actual sales turn out to be, plus 10% of the NAGBOR, plus all of the presentation expenses.

There are as many variations to the Guarantee, Co-promote, and Four-Wall deals as there are productions. The deal arrangements described above apply to touring musicals. In the concert world, the flat fee or Guarantee is the norm.

The Producer's Team

The Booking Agent

The booking agent is the producer's liaison between the show and the presenter. The main task for the agent is to secure and set up engagements all across a specific territory. For each tour, a geographic order known as routing is set up. The booker must pay careful attention to the travel time and distance between venues. It's much more efficient to move in a steady, direct route, than to zigzag north, south, east, and west. This is as true for small dance companies as it is for large musicals. For example, it is better to move from Boston to Philadelphia to Washington, D.C. for three consecutive playing weeks than to go from Boston to Atlanta to Chicago. Because theatrical tours pay their personnel for eight performances per week, whether they are played or not, the booker makes every attempt to secure engagements that will allow eight performances per week in each city.

Although staring at a blank booking calendar can be daunting for a beginner, an experienced booking agent sees it as an opportunity. The process begins with a "ghost route," an ideal tour that makes the most sense geographically with reasonably short jumps from venue to venue. Reality sets in as a few "anchor dates" are settled on. Anchor dates are in those key cities that consist of multiweek engagements operated by experienced presenters who know how to market and present an attraction. Next the agent has to fill in bookings from anchor to anchor. Ideally this will be done with no down time or layoff weeks; layoff weeks cost the producer money as many of the normal operating costs cannot be eliminated for a limited layoff. The key to the process is thinking of the tour as a chain, with no, or very few, weak links.

For attractions that will play split-weeks and one-nighters, bookers usually begin with one geographic area—Texas, for example—and assign a specific time period to it. Large booking agencies assign specific agents to specific territories so that the agents can be informed about the particular markets they are selling in and get to know the presenters in their market. The goal is to acquire as many dates in as small a geographic area as possible. As above, shorter travel distances are better than long.

When a number of different presenters in a geographical area share similar programming interests that are normally limited to one-night or split-week engagements, they can negotiate with booking agents as a group to strengthen their bargaining clout. By giving agents a block of time that can be booked solid with reasonable traveling distances between venues, the consortium can usually buy attractions at reduced rates and can be assured that the dates will be firm. Michigan Presenters Network, Ohio Presenters, the Pennsylvania Presenters Network, and other statewide consortia have undertaken successful block bookings.

One of the major problems that a booking agent faces is that oral commitments sometimes fail to develop into contractual commitments. Presenters may express interest in a product, and may even hold time for it, but in the end might have to release the date because of other commitments or because they've changed their minds. Sometimes presenters play the odds, which results in their failing to release dates in a timely fashion. This then leaves the booking agent with an unfilled date and no revenue for the attraction for that particular week. Conversely, the booking agent may hold more than one venue for a particular date, which can cause havoc in the presenters' world. Clearly, a direct approach to booking, holding dates, and the speedy execution of contracts is in the best interest of both the presenter and the booking agent.

Contracting the Tour

Bookers have standard form contracts that are mostly fill-in-the-blank. There is almost always some type of technical rider that becomes part of the agreement. Copies of the signed documents go to the presenter, booker, producer, company manager, and any other relevant player in the process. (See Appendix K, Sample Artists' Contracts.)

The Producer/ Mounting the Production

Most tours rehearse from three to six weeks prior to their first engagement, and the tour producer must follow the same steps as other theatrical producers. But there are a few matters unique to tour management that deserve mention. Especially germane to tour producers are the duties and responsibilities of three key managers who work for him or her: the general manager, the company manager, and the production stage manager.

The General Manager

The general manager slot may be filled by an associate or employee of the producer, by an independent general manager, or even by the producer who would then serve in a double role. In any case, the general manager works with the producer on production expenses and with the booker on local theatre expenses to determine what costs and other obligations are necessary to the attraction in question. If the attraction is a current or recent theatre production, this process may have to begin with a check on the initial set of production contracts to discover which, if any, of the original creative team members have the right of first refusal to work on subsequent productions. Also the general manager may have to determine the size of the royalty package those contracts mandate in terms of road performances. Other factors that may have a major influence on the cost of a tour include:

1.) The size of the physical production. What are the costs involved in redesigning or adapting existing scenery? Will the current scenery withstand the necessary travel, load-ins, and load-outs? In recent years great strides have been made to bring the same production quality that exists on Broadway to audiences outside New York, and accordingly, expenses have risen, as well.

2.) The number of trucks necessary to move the production.

3.) The number of stagehands necessary to load, unload, assemble, and operate the show. How long will the load-in take?

4.) Costumes: Will new costumes need to be designed or redesigned and built; or, can they be rented?

5.) Orchestrations: Can the existing Broadway orchestrations be used? Or can they be adapted to fewer musicians without losing the desired effect? How many musicians will travel with the production? Will local players need to be hired for each engagement?

The general manager or a production coordinator may also work with designers and a technical supervisor or master carpenter to put together a technical rider to the booking contract rider. (See Appendix J.) This will give local presenters a complete idea of the costs and expenses related to such matters as dressing room requirements, star amenities, and the number of stagehands and musicians who must be hired locally. Stagehands may have to be members of IATSE, in which case the show is called a "yellow card" attraction. The presenter will be informed about how many IATSE workers must be hired in such areas as electrics, sound, props, wardrobe, and carpentry for the load-in, performances, and load-out. The appropriate union members are then pulled from the ranks of the local IATSE and sent to the job. Touring musicians are usually AFM members; often, additional players are needed to augment the traveling group. If so, local AFM members are hired through a local contractor who specializes in supplying talent for visiting shows.

Depending on the complexity of the attraction, it may be necessary to send an advance carpenter or crew to do a site survey. This means that a technical supervisor or his designee checks out the theatre to be sure that there is enough room onstage for the production.

Whatever happens on stage, the general manager continues as an active off-stage player throughout the tour. All of the traveling personnel—artistic, technical, and managerial—must be cared for, managed, and paid. Fees and royalties must be collected, adjustments dictated by penalties and lost performances must be made, disbursements must be handed out, and disagreements must be resolved. And all such responsibilities must observe deadlines dictated by curtain times and union rules, even though the general manager is sitting in an office hundreds of miles away.

The Company Manager

A company manager is responsible for booking the company and crew housing and travel. In recent years, several agencies have emerged that handle all housing and travel arrangements for touring companies. Because of the amount of business that they conduct with various hotels and motels across the country, they are often able to secure very good discounted rates for the show. Booking hotel rooms for any tour can be a very time-consuming task, so if there is a reasonable way to off-load that task, it's wise to do so.

Once the production is actually on the road, the company manager is the producer's top on-site representative. He or she must be very familiar with contracts in order to represent accurately the producer's interests at settlement time. There should be daily phone and email contact between the general manager and the company manager. Financial settlements, box office statements, programs, check registers, petty cash reconciliations, and media reviews must be sent to the general manager weekly.

In addition to his or her other duties, the company manager has as a top priority weekly payroll preparation, which is rarely a routine matter. Factors such as percentage royalties, overtime, additional services, and missed performances always prevent any two payrolls from being identical. There are companies—Castellana Payroll Services, for example—that are set up to prepare theatrical payrolls and using one of these services is highly recommended. They not only cut payroll checks and/or direct deposits, they also make appropriate tax deposits and some can prepare union reports if necessary.

The Production Stage Manager

The production stage manager who travels with the show also serves as a vital link with the producer and general manager, especially in regard to artistic, personnel, and technical matters. Together with the company manager, the stage manager helps to set and maintain company morale. Often the grueling and narrowly focused life on the road causes people to lose perspective, and it is very helpful if someone in the position of authority can defuse and manage any situations that might arise.

Promotional Support and Marketing

The booking contract usually states a minimum amount of money that the producer agrees to absorb for the local "media buy." The producer's office or press agent works with the local presenter or marketing director to coordinate this buy. In addition, the producer supplies fliers—also known as heralds—posters, logos, advertising copy and copy for news releases, radio and television commercials—the latter may be actual prerecorded audio or digital (video) tapes. The star may also record telephone interviews with local radio stations well before the show arrives. On tour, the press agent works closely with the company manager and stage manager to maximize the limited amount of time the star gives for interviews and promotional appearances. Reports on box office "wraps"—money taken in each day—and advances from the venues where the attraction has been booked are used to determine where additional advertising and publicity are necessary. Promotion experts either from the producer's or the booker's office may be sent to venues where single ticket sales need beefing up. The marketing process for a touring production may involve researching population demographics in order to select the prime venues for a particular attraction. (See Suzanne Gooch's Checklist for Presenting and Touring International Companies in Appendix L, and Hosting the Attraction, Appendix M.)

Summary

This chapter has dealt with presenters, those special managers who have a feel for their audiences and the work they must undertake in hosting a tour. That juggling act of finding a space, contracting for an attraction, handling the marketing, and providing all kinds of staffing requires a special kind of person because presenting is a risky business. There is no law of nature that guarantees an attraction will play to packed houses in one city because it did in another. There is no accounting for snowstorms, blackouts, and other kinds of disasters, natural or otherwise, that can mess up a really wonderful booking. Maybe there should be a warning on every show similar to that on mutual funds: Past performance is no guarantee of future results.

The history of presenting is virtually a history of the road, those theatres, opera houses, and performing arts centers all over the country where attractions take on yet another life, after or even during their initial runs in New York or elsewhere. Although this chapter uses touring musicals as the key examples, the principles apply to any type of touring production. Note that the concerns of the booker are the same as those for anyone planning a trip: getting from here to there via the most efficient/cost-effective route, although the cost of being late is substantially greater than being late for dinner. And notwithstanding the cooperation among producers and bookers and presenters, the discussion has demonstrated that a dollar won on one side of the transaction is a dollar lost on the other.