

Getting Broadway to Alaska

The journey to bring Broadway Alaska to life started in 2022, during COVID. The team at the PAC was exploring how we could expand the Broadway experience for our community and develop a new way forward post-pandemic. Through a lot of evaluation, building of models and planning, with the support of the M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust, ultimately we partnered with The Nederlander Organization to bring official national touring Broadway to Alaskans, right here at home!

Official tours coming to Alaska take multiple years of planning, in our case 18 months to 2 years for each production. A big reason is due to the fact that shows are used to moving by truck and bus, and to put Alaska consistently on the touring Broadway map we needed to adjust our methods to get the shows here faster – mostly by air cargo. To do this, we must charter flights and work with the shows to move their cargo in a way they are not used to ... until now!



Warehouse prep for building/breaking down pallets for air cargo transport of Mean Girls.

Funding

Did you know that the Alaska Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. (ACPA) takes on the significant financial responsibility for moving Broadway shows from their last stop in the Lower 48 to Alaska and back? The “Alaska Factor” portion of moving the shows to the Last Frontier, including chartering cargo planes, trucking in Alaska from the airport to the PAC and back and covering all associated costs is the sole responsibility of ACPA, the nonprofit that operates, maintains and manages the PAC venue, which is owned by the Municipality of Anchorage. The movement of a touring Broadway show to Alaska is complicated and expensive, requiring months and sometimes years of planning, and we do it with the help of key partners who also believe in Broadway’s exciting place in our community. Our goal is to keep costs as low as possible, knowing that we have a lot of expenses to cover in order to get Broadway to our Alaskan stage.

Partners

We would not be able to bring these productions to Alaska without the backing of several incredible partners:

The Nederlander Organization is our presenting partner. Nederlander shares in the cost and coordination required for presenting the show itself. This involves everything from collaborating on selection of Broadway Alaska’s season line up and how that is scheduled in our venue amongst all the other programs and events that take place in the PAC, booking the Broadway productions, negotiating the agreements with the productions’ agents, coordinating the tour’s movement plan, and ongoing planning with ACPA’s team in advance of the show’s arrival.



Mean Girls cross load of pallets at Anchorage airport onto airplane for departure for San Francisco.

Logistics

Air Cargo Experts – we work with Henx Logistics to coordinate the air cargo charters needed to move the show’s sets and costumes to Alaska. We use air cargo to keep within the national touring schedule and ensure that Alaska can get the latest and best Broadway shows. Most of the shows that route to Alaska close on a Sunday matinee or evening performance somewhere in the Lower 48 and open in Anchorage at the PAC on the following Wednesday. Henx and the ACPA team design the most efficient plan for each show’s move, together with the show’s production team. This includes developing a packing plan for the cargo that allows us the greatest efficiency and selection of the right size cargo plane.

Additional Logistics - Henx also coordinates and manages the necessary labor needed at the airport warehouses to unload the shows trailers once they arrive from their last theatre destination by truck. Once at the warehouse, air cargo pallets are built from the preplanned design to load on the plane destined for Alaska. Once the plane arrives in Alaska, Henx coordinates the labor in the Alaska warehouse with Naniq Logistics, where they breakdown the air cargo pallets to crossload onto trailers provided by TOTE, and then United Freight drivers move them to the PAC. Then the reverse is done once the show closes in Anchorage – usually on a Sunday matinee, and it moves to its next Lower 48 destination to open on Tuesday night.

Other Options - When we have time, due to a show’s vacation week or other schedule factors, we ship some or all of the trailers via our partner, TOTE. This option is less expensive, but often we don’t have enough time for this method.

Touring Shows – each touring show is like a small business that we work with throughout the planning process and their engagement in Alaska. Each has its own marketing, company and production management, booking agency and producers.

Season Sponsors – both Alaska Airlines and GCI are Broadway Alaska’s season sponsors. These two companies said “YES,” from the start of the dream of Broadway Alaska, and continue to be incredible supporters of the program and vision to bring Times



One of the planes that moved Mean Girls to Alaska from Chicago and then to San Francisco after the Anchorage engagement.

Square to Town Square. Everyone at Broadway Alaska and the PAC is beyond grateful for the support and impact these community minded businesses have made – we can’t do this without them!

In addition to our lead sponsors, we also collaborate with engagement, community and logistics sponsors for each event, it takes a network of annual contributions and in-kind support to help create the financial reality it takes to move Broadway to Alaska.

Community Businesses – businesses like Premier Alaska Tours, Hotel Captain Cook, cAKe Studio, Clothesline, Crush, Bear Tooth, 49th State Brewing, Gumbo House and many more work closely with us and provide in-kind support, promotion and help make members of the touring company feel at home here in Alaska.

Community Outreach – for each Broadway Alaska engagement, we execute a special outreach plan to enhance the experience for our youth. From the Hamilton Creative Contest to Mean Girls Buddy Bench Project - our goal is to leave a lasting impact and inspire our youth for careers in or as lifelong patrons of the Arts.

Media Outlets – it takes a lot of effort and cost to get the word out to our community about the season and each individual Broadway show. With Nederlander, ACPA develops and distributes a season campaign that shares information about the full season and communicates the importance and value of subscribing. Each show, in turn, has a marketing plan and team that works closely with us to share more in-depth information about each show as they go on sale and get closer to their time in our community.

PAC Board & Staff – ACPA's board of directors includes 31 members from our community and the staff is comprised of over 60 professionals – 32 Full Time Operations Staff and 32 Part Time Event Staff.

Backstage Crew – IATSE Stagehands and other production professionals provide the stage labor that is needed to operate the shows. Each production travels with a certain number of road crew members and they merge with local stagehands here in Alaska to bring the show to life.

And, most importantly, **YOU**—our **President's Club Members** and **Subscribers** — you are the central part of our community and why we are so committed to this work. Your ongoing support, commitment and enjoyment are essential to making Broadway in Alaska possible.

Thank you!

Story by Codie Costello, President & COO, ACPA and General Manager, Broadway Alaska

In our next edition: How Do We Select the Season?