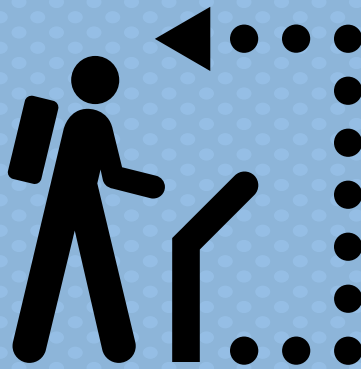


BAM! Complete Guide to Mentoring

by Robert Baird



#2

A guide for mentors and first-time attendees at performing arts conferences

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BAM! Complete Guide to Mentoring/Being Mentored

1. Value of Mentoring

Most conferences in the performing arts offer an opportunity for new colleagues or first-time attenders to have a mentor who will act as a resource person, someone the neophyte can rely on for advice and answers. Being a mentor is a way of “giving back” to the performing arts industry and sharing your knowledge and experience with those who are just entering the field. It is a rewarding activity and the mentoring relationship is often a two-way street: the mentor can learn from the mentee as well. An effective mentor is one who guides new colleagues and helps them achieve their goals. Do not take on the role of mentoring unless you are prepared to add your mentees to your list of close contacts and are willing to assist them long after the conference mentoring sessions have ended.

2. The Ideal Mentor

The ideal mentor is one who is seriously committed to the mentoring process and ensures that his or her assigned mentee is well taken care of.

A mentor offers the wisdom of his/her knowledge and experience, a subjective or objective opinion (depending upon the topic), available options and creative ideas.

A mentor is a good listener and takes cues from the needs of the mentee.

A mentor continues the mentoring process well beyond the particular conference and is always available for guidance and advice.

3. First Contact: Pre-Conference

First of all the mentor should make an initial contact by email or telephone and introduce him/herself. This first conversation can be used to garner information about your mentee and to let them know that you are available to answer any questions or concerns they may have about the upcoming conference. You might ask them where they are staying, make sure they know about transportation options from the airport to the hotel and if they will be attending the new colleagues' session. You should ascertain if they have specific questions and try to provide answers. The main thing is to listen to what they say, understand their goals in attending the conference and then offering them viable options. Plan to have an initial meeting at the conference, especially if your mentee is unable to attend the new colleagues' session.

4. First-time Attendee Tips for Agent/Manager Exhibitors

a) Pre-Conference Preparation

Bring PLENTY of business cards (with website address).

Bring artists' materials for display and distribution.

Bring your roster brochure.

Bring your artists' tour calendars.

Set up appointments, if possible, with presenters who will be attending and who would be most likely interested in your artists and able to book them.

Send out* a postcard or artist showcasing notice to all presenters who will be attending the conference.

**Note that before a conference attendees (presenters, agents, artists and more) receive hundreds of postcards and most of them end up in the garbage or recycle. To make this kind of promotion effective, you must have developed a relationship with a presenter over the course of the year leading up to the conference, not just sending out a pre-conference mailing and hoping it will be effective.*

b) Setting up the booth

Newbies often make a classic mistake when setting up their booth by placing their tables at the front of the booth and creating a barrier to entering the booth. They think that it is best to display their materials at the front of their booth, along the aisle, because people coming along the aisle will stop and look at their materials and perhaps they will be able to strike up a conversation. DO NOT DO THIS. There is a psychological phenomenon which occurs in every exhibit hall, usually on the first day of exhibiting, and this is what I call the “deer in the headlights/blinders” look. This is especially true of presenters who will come down an aisle, looking neither right nor left, avoiding all eye contact and trying to make it through the hall to see who is exhibiting

without stopping at any particular booth. In order to deal with this phenomenon I urge all exhibitors to make their booths open and inviting. Leave your tables at the sides or back of the booth. Have attractive banners (pull-up banners are recommended) and perhaps decorations for your booth which will enhance its look (be creative!). Chocolate of any kind is a favourite or have a give-away. Presenters will wander in and once they are in your booth, you can have a meaningful conversation with them and introduce them to your roster.

c) Booth Materials

You might consider having two types of promotional materials on hand: a simple set and a more complete set. You could have your roster listed on a sheet with minimal artist information and have a complete roster booklet containing more information on each of your artists. You could have a single promotional sheet on each of your artists and have a complete press kit (bio, photo, program descriptions, press clippings, reviews, technical rider, hospitality rider, touring history, performance history, fees, CDs, videos, information on educational activities, workshops, master classes, etc.)

The reason for this is simple. Some booth attendees may just be gathering materials to see what is available, while others may be seriously interested in one of your artists. For the former, the simple promotional material is more appropriate

and for the latter, you will want them to have full information to help them make their booking decision. Either way, you may be asked to email or mail the materials rather than them taking them away with them. Never force materials on a presenter.

d) Booth Audio-visual

If you want to have audio or visual materials for your artists, be sure to have headphones for listening, so you do not disturb adjoining booths.

You can rent audio-visual equipment from the exhibition services company, or bring your own. One exhibitor I know purchases a video set-up for each conference and then donates the equipment to a local charity (a very creative promotional strategy).

e) Booth Encounters

Getting to know a presenter is like getting to know anyone: be interested in them and ask questions. Where are they from? What kind of venue do they have? What artists have they programmed? Which artists have been successful? What is their mission? How many events a year do they program? Do they block book? Do they do residencies? The more information you can glean, the better you will be able to address their specific needs. Do not try to show off your entire roster before you know what would work for them. Be friendly. Ask them if they would like to take some materials with them or have you mail or email them. Make

notes of what you learned and what was said during the conversation (if possible) or after they leave the booth. DO NOT try to get people into your booth by accosting them as they pass down the aisle. The aisles are NEUTRAL territory and, if people pass you by today, they may be back later in the conference – they set their agendas. Exhibitors who are too aggressive give the agent/manager/exhibiting artist a bad name and make it difficult for everyone to connect.

Ask for a business card from EVERYONE who comes into your booth. Keep the cards and attach to the notes you have made.

Know the fee range for each of your artists and their bottom-line fee, particular touring restrictions, etc.

f) Other Encounters

Have an “elevator speech” ready and practice it until it trips off your tongue. This is basically, in 25 words or less, what you do and why you are unique. It is called an elevator speech because that represents both where you might use it and the time you would have in which to do it!

You should also have in your arsenal, a “main message” presentation which will be used in your booth or when you have more time for conversation with potential bookers.

Each of your artists deserves a descriptive paragraph in which you extol their uniqueness, their vibrant performing

programs, and their past successes and why they should be booked. As artist representatives, it is up to you to know what is unique about the artist and try to convince presenters to consider booking your artists.

It is a highly competitive field with a myriad of artists and increasingly fewer opportunities for those artists to perform. You need to develop an edge, an unusual program, a take on repertoire which is unique, etc. Talent is simply accepted as a given.

g) What else should I plan on attending?

You should make it a point to attend professional development sessions, workshops, block-booking meetings, state consortia meetings, the organization's membership meeting, all conference meals and social gatherings, etc. The conference and all of its myriad activities should be your main focus. There are innumerable opportunities for networking at all of these events, in the elevators, at the bar, etc. Take advantage of them all. And take your business cards EVERYWHERE!

h) Is there a dress code?

Be prepared with both business and casual attire, and perhaps something for a social occasion. Wear comfortable shoes for the exhibit hall – you'll be standing on concrete for hours.

i) What are the benefits for a first-time exhibitor?

Seeing what the competition is doing and how they are doing it.

Ask questions and learn from more experienced exhibitors.

Establishing your presence and the presence of your artists in the performing arts field (and annual attendance at a conference is a must. The field needs to know that you are committed to it and that your artists will be available for future programming (presenters are usually booking 1-3 years ahead of the date of any conference).

Learn from professional development sessions.

Meet presenters and other bookers.

Meet and connect with colleagues.

Learn more about the presenting arts field.

Discover emerging trends.

j) Final words of advice

Remember to relax and have fun.

Networking opportunities include bus rides, hotel lobby bars and convention hall coffee/sandwich shops.

Be sure to follow up with EVERY contact you make via email, notes or a phone call.

5. First-time Attendee Tips for Presenters

a) Pre-Conference Preparation

Bring PLENTY of business cards (with website address)
Bring copies of your season brochure
Bring your venue's technical specifications
Bring a notebook and pens
Bring a stapler to attach business cards in your notebook

b) Knowledge to Bring

Know about your venue, its history, its mission
Know your audiences' tastes and preferences
Know your budget
Know what other activities you require of an artist
(residency, meet and greet, master classes, workshops,
community events, etc.)
Know what travel and/or accommodation you can offer
Know your venue's schedule (bring a copy of your calendar
with you)

c) Technical Information

Dimensions (lxwxh) of your stage
Type of stage (sprung? raked? hardwood?)
Dance floor available (Marley? Matlay?)
Wing space, legs and borders
Itemized list of lighting instruments

Sound equipment available (and sound man)
Size of apron or pit
Colour of curtains and seats
Number of seats in hall
Number of seating areas (Loges? Balconies?)
Dressing rooms, green rooms, artist bathrooms
Loading Dock and parking information

d) Visiting Booths

See who is exhibiting and make a plan. Visit the ones you are most interested in first.

Be sure to budget time to see first-time exhibitors and other booths of interest

Observe booth etiquette: do not interrupt or impinge on any on-going conversations between another presenter and an exhibitor.

Be prepared to say “no” if you are really not interested in an artist. Any other response is disrespectful. It is better to be honest than to lead someone on to waste their time and yours.

e) What can I expect to come away with from a booth visit?

You can gather materials (or have them sent to you) for artists you wish to book. (Brochure, biography,

repertoire lists, CDs, Videos, etc.) Do not take materials for artists you have no intention of booking. Promotional materials are expensive and should be treated with the proper respect.

You should be able to determine, through discussion with the artist or agent the suitability of an artist for your venue and audience.

You should know that your space can accommodate the artist(s) in whom you are interested.

You should be made aware of the fee range for the artist(s).

You should know what other activities the artist(s) would be willing to undertake in connection with their performance at your venue (residency, meet and greet, master classes, workshops, community events, etc.)

You should have an idea of what to expect from their Technical and Hospitality Riders.

You should know if the artist(s) have any other bookings in your area, allowing you to become part of a block-booking tour.

If desired, you might get references of presenters similar to your venue size and audience who have booked the artist(s).

f) What About Showcases?

It is often tempting for Presenters to view travel to a conference as an opportunity for tourist activities or getting together with colleagues, and, while these are certainly doable, they should not be chosen over attending showcases. The Showcase performances are an essential part of the knowledge you must acquire as a presenter. There are Juried Showcases and Independent Showcases at most conferences and you should make an effort to attend as many as you can. Often, this may mean delaying dinner or other activities, but you owe it the showcasing artists to attend their performances and decide if the artist might make a welcome addition to your programming. Information on showcasing is found in every conference program or in a separate showcase publication. Even if you attend a showcase of an artist you cannot book yourself, you will have been exposed to a unique presentation and may be able to perhaps recommend the artist to a colleague. Since we often use the phrase, “we are all in this together,” you owe artists your support: attend the showcases.

g) What else should I plan on attending?

You should make it a point to attend professional development sessions, workshops, block-booking meetings, state consortia meetings, the organization’s membership meeting, all conference meals and social gatherings, etc. The conference and all of its myriad activities should be your main focus. There are innumerable opportunities for

networking at all of these events, in the elevators, at the bar, etc. Take advantage of them all. And take your business cards EVERYWHERE!

h) Is there a dress code?

Be prepared with both business and casual attire, and perhaps something for a social occasion. Wear comfortable shoes for the exhibit hall.

i) What are the benefits for a first-time presenter?

- Networking with new colleagues
- Benefitting from the knowledge of more experienced presenters
- Learn from professional development sessions
- Meet artists and agents/managers
- Attend live performances
- Learn more about the presenting arts field
- Develop your programming season
- Discover emerging trends
- Develop new and better ways of arts presenting in all its many facets

j) Final words of advice

Remember to relax and have fun.
Networking opportunities include bus rides, hotel lobby bars and convention hall coffee/sandwich shops.

Be sure to follow up with EVERY contact you make via email, notes or a phone call.

6. First-time Attendee Tips for Exhibiting Artists

Please refer to Section 4 above

7. First-time Attendee Tips for Non-Exhibiting Artists

Often, an artist will attend a conference with a view to meeting agents or managers and getting representation. This is absolutely a non-starter. Many agent/manager exhibitors resent artists who attempt to do this and will not give them the time of day. When you think about it, they do have a point. They have invested good money in an exhibit booth in order to promote the artists currently on their roster. They are at the conference to meet potential bookers for their artists and they are loathe to take the time to speak to artists who want representation. They have their hands full promoting the artists they already have on their roster.

Consider the exhibit hall as a resource center for your goal of seeking representation. Go around the hall and see who represents artists like yourself. Check out the promotional materials other artists have. Take business cards and plan to approach suitable agents/managers after the conference to see if they might be interested in considering representing you.

Use your conference time to network with other artists, attend workshops and all possible conference events and bring PLENTY of business cards to distribute, along with a simple brochure.

8. The New Colleagues/First-timer's Meeting

a) Logistics

The first-timers'/new colleagues' session will usually be held on the first day of the conference. Mentors/mentees will be assigned to a specific table and seated together. There should be a list of mentor/mentee assignments on a board outside the meeting room and who is assigned to which table. Each table will normally have a mix of presenters, agents, managers, artists and at least one mentor.

b) Typical Agenda

1. Welcome from conference organizers, co-chairs, Executive Director, Conference Director, etc.
2. Overview of conference history, objectives, etc.
3. Introductions of guests, responsible parties, etc.
4. Survey of room for how many artists, agents, managers, mentors, others in attendance
5. Ice-breaker activity (optional)
6. Information on floor plans, various buildings being used for conference.

7. Information on resource tables (where presenters can display materials, where agents/artists/managers/can display materials.)
8. Introduction and explanation of conference program book, other printed resources.
9. Introduction to name tags at the conference – significance of colour, ribbons, etc. (Note that inexperienced attendees invariably have their name badge hanging too low on their body. When they sit down for a meal or meeting, their badge disappears below table level and makes it difficult to identify them. If your badge has a sliding bead on it, make a knot in the end of the badge string so the bead cannot slide off and then adjust the position of the badge so it can be seen when you are seated.)
10. Information on additional programs offered by the conference (discovery sessions, one-on-one consultations, dine-arounds, consortia meetings, other meetings - NAPAMA, CPAE session, organization membership meeting, etc.)
11. Information on juried showcases (the application process, panel make-up, selection, when and where held, etc.)
12. Information on independent showcases (when and where held)
13. Information on the Exhibit Hall (hours of operation, open and accessible hours, protocols and ethics (NAPAMA Guidelines), layout of the hall, hints on how to work the hall, etc.)
14. Information on workshops and other educational sessions.

15. Information on hospitality events and keynotes.
16. Information on block-booking meetings.
17. Segue to Table Conversations.

c) Table Conversations

As a mentor, you should direct the table conversation. If the above agenda has not been covered then, by all means, make sure you address these items for the mentees at the table. If these items have been covered, then utilize the table time to have everyone at the table introduce themselves and perhaps give an idea of why they are at the conference. It is a good idea for everyone at the table to exchange business cards (one reason why you should bring PLENTY of business cards). Certainly questions should be answered and there might be opportunities for discussions of topics of interest to the mentees at the table. As a mentor, you should let the mentees know your booth number if you are exhibiting, or your cell number, so they can contact you during the conference.

9. First-timer Tips for The Exhibit Hall

Many conferences have adopted the concept of open hours and accessible hours. The open hours are when the exhibit hall is “officially” in business and all booths will be manned; accessible hours are times when the hall is available but there is no requirement that booths be manned. Some people like to wander into a booth when the exhibit staff is not there, so they can browse at their leisure. Exhibit hall protocol dictates that, if you visit an unmanned booth, that you leave your

business card. If you take any materials, it should be because you have a genuine interest in the artist whose materials these are.

Exhibitors should know that any material left on display in the booth during accessible hours is considered give-away. If you wish to retain specific materials, they should be placed out of sight.

You can learn a lot from other booths in the exhibit hall. It is considered inappropriate for exhibitors to take anything from another exhibitor's booth (unless you are also a presenter or will pass it on to a presenter).

Exhibit halls are guarded when the hall is closed, but valuable items have been known to disappear. Hiding it under the table may be sufficient for most items, but if you have something you really don't want to lose, take it with you when you leave the hall.

a) NAPAMA Ethical Guidelines

The NAPAMA (See BAM! Complete Guide to Acronyms) Ethical Guidelines contain a section for Conferences and Conventions. The guidelines were developed to provide some direction for agents and managers and have been adopted by many American and Canadian arts organizations.

The evolving dynamics of the industry make the traditional "we-they" dichotomies increasingly inaccurate and counter-productive. The roles and

functions of artists, managers, presenters, funders, and service providers have become more fluid. Nonetheless, crowded convention schedules and problematic ratios among professionals create a condition of scarcity for contacts, a situation that offers possibilities for abuse and offense. To avoid conflict, observe the basic rules of politeness, decency, and common courtesy, and in particular, respect territoriality in the exhibit hall. Colleagues purchased exhibit space and, with it, a zone of influence which should extend only as far as necessary for two or three people to stand and converse comfortably.

1. Exhibits should not impinge on neighboring spaces nor should they block or obstruct the view of another booth.
2. Audio-visual equipment should be oriented so as to be viewed from within the exhibit space, not from outside.
3. The aisles should be considered a neutral space in which presenters may circulate freely without being accosted.
4. "Sellers" should not approach "buyers" in front of another seller's space.
5. Conversations among colleagues should not be interrupted.
6. At educational sessions, showcases and hospitality events, attendees should not be distracted from the business at hand with sales-oriented conversations.

Infractions of these guidelines make the exhibit hall a distasteful experience for many. Adherence to them helps assure that all concerned may better profit from the investment made in our artists' careers.

b) Presenter Protocols

Basic rules of courtesy and respect are key to proper behaviour in the exhibit hall.

1. Never interrupt a conversation going on in an exhibit booth. Wait your turn or leave your card and come back later.
2. Be honest. If you want to browse, say so. If, after learning about an artist, you know that there is little or no chance of your booking that artist, say so. “No” (or “I’m not interested”) is the second best answer an agent/manager/artist can receive from a presenter (“Yes, I want to book this artist, “being the best).
3. Conversations with agents/managers/artists need not be simply commercial but can range far and wide and should be viewed as learning opportunities and ways of developing an ongoing professional relationship.
4. Exhibitors appreciate a wave or a quick “hello” even if you can’t stop in.

10. Who’s Who and What’s What at a Conference

Agent: Artists’ representative either with own firm or as a member of a larger firm.

Arts Council: State, province, region, or city arts agency or arts organization actively promoting the arts.

Attendee Lists: A list of conference attendees with complete contact information. Note that not all conferences are able to provide a complete list due to privacy issues and may only provide a list of attendees who have opted-in to have their contact information disseminated.

Co-Chair: One of the honorary attendees who has been chosen to advise on conference focus and content. Usually there is one presenter co-chair and one agent/manager co-chair.

Conference Committee: A group of people asked by the conference to assist with different aspects of the conference.

Contact List: A list of conference attendees with complete contact information. Note that not all conferences are able to provide a complete list due to privacy issues and may only provide a list of attendees who have opted-in to have their contact information disseminated.

Dine-Arounds: An opportunity to network with colleagues at a particular restaurant on a particular night. Sign-up lists are placed on a bulletin board near the registration area and each group is led by a conference volunteer. A variety of local restaurants are chosen and everyone pays for their own meal.

Exhibitor: Anyone who has purchased a booth in the exhibit hall.

First-Timer: Anyone attending the conference for the first time.

Host Committee: A committee set up to assist with local hospitality event and provide information on the host city for the conference.

Independent Showcases: Showcases organized by artists/agent/managers either on-site or off- site.

Juried Showcases: Artists chosen by a jury to showcase at a conference. These showcases are part of the official program.

Keynote Speaker: The main speaker at a conference.

Manager: Artists' personal representative.

Membership List: A list of all members of a particular organization.

Mentee: Anyone being mentored as a first-time attendee or new colleague at a conference.

Mentor: Anyone mentoring a first-time attendee or new colleague.

New Colleague: Anyone attending the conference for the first time.

Non-Exhibiting Artist: Artist attending conference with no booth in exhibit hall.

Non-Exhibiting Agent: Agent attending conference with no booth in exhibit hall.

Non-Exhibiting Manager: Manager attending conference with no booth in exhibit hall.

Presenter: Anyone who books artists.

Program Book: The official guide to the conference, listing personnel, events, with maps of the conference site, showcase listings, etc.

Service Organization: An arts service organization, possibly exhibiting or just attending the conference.

Showcase Listing Guide: A separate booklet listing all of the Showcases at a conference.

Speaker: Anyone who will speak at a professional development session.

Sponsor: Any artist, agent, manager, organization or business which has contributed money to a particular function or event or for promotional considerations at the conference.

Spotlight Showcases: Artists chosen by a jury (panel) to showcase at a conference. These showcases are part of the official program.

Staff: Anyone on the staff of the organization responsible for the conference.

Volunteer: Anyone who volunteers to assist with any aspect of the conference.

11. Final Words of Advice

Be sure to check the conference website and any organizational emails or newsletters regarding the conference. NAPAMA's quarterly newsletter contains information on each conference (www.napama.org). If you are new to a conference prepare as much as possible before you go: speak with your mentor and take advantage of his or her knowledge and experience. Do some research on the conference city, conference venue, conference program, conference showcases, etc. well in advance. Plan your conference experience as much as possible. When you attend the conference the next year, become a mentor yourself and pass on what you have learned. Mentoring and being mentored is one of the ways in which the industry provides a succession plan. Be a part of it.

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Consulting website: www.bairdartists.com



Robert Baird, President of Baird Artists Management, is now available for consultation and advice regarding Canadian and U.S. regulations and information for performers, agents/managers and performing arts venues. Mr. Baird has been in the performing arts for over fifty years and has had distinguished careers in education, publishing and musical theatre. He served on the Board of Directors (2008-2010) and was President (2011-2013) of the North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents (NAPAMA). He was Treasurer and Vice-President of Festivals and Events Ontario (FEO) and served on that Board on various committees (2010-2013). Mr. Baird received the Arts Northwest Coyote Award and the Performing Arts Exchange Mary Beth Treen Award in 2012. He is Chair of Team Agent Network (TAN) and APAP Showcase Coordinator.

Robert is a regular columnist in *International Musician: The Official Journal of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada* (Circulation 100,000+ Monthly) where he writes a monthly column entitled "Crossing Borders". The column focuses on what artists need to know to get into Canada or the United States. He also writes a monthly column entitled "Artist Manager's Toolkit" for *International Arts Manager*, based in London, England.

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