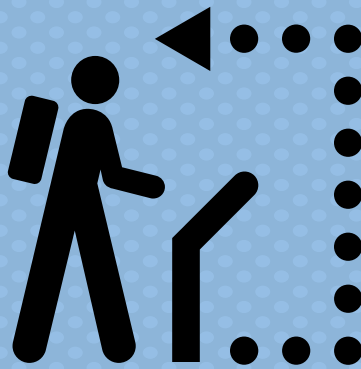


BAM! Complete Guide to Conferences - International

by Robert Baird



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A guide to international
performing arts conferences

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Introduction

Conferences take place for different reasons and everyone involved in the performing arts has to decide which conferences are most valuable for their particular goals. A presenter may attend a conference to book part of or a complete season, attend workshops, re-connect with colleagues, and take in local attractions or any combination of the above. An agent will most likely attend to connect with presenters, have an exhibit booth, and/or present artists from their roster in showcases. An artist may be attending to try to get an agent, see how the conference works, and pick up some ideas on how to be successful or to showcase at the event. Whatever the reason, conferences are part of the overall investment in your work and you must be selective in terms of time and effort you can expend on conferences in general. Conferences are expensive to attend and it may take some time before you are able to realize a return on your investment. Attendance at a conference has many benefits:

- An opportunity to connect with colleagues
- An opportunity to learn about the industry
- An opportunity to showcase your talent (See *BAM! Complete Guide to Showcasing*)
- An opportunity to experience different cultures, events, geography, climate, architecture and more.

Choose which conference or conferences are best for you at any given time. Seek the advice of trusted colleagues who may have attended the conference to ascertain if it would be valuable for you to attend. Be prepared to get the most out of any conference you attend (see “How to Work a Conference” below). Attending a conference can be exhilarating, a must for anyone involved in the performing arts. Let’s get started with international performing arts conferences:

Conference	Website	Where	When
APACA	www.apaca.com.au	AUSTRALIA: Sydney	August
APAM	www.performingartsmarket.com.au	AUSTRALIA: Brisbane	February (Biennial)
APAP	www.apap365.org	USA: New York, NY	January
AWME	www.awme.com.au	AUSTRALIA: Melbourne	November
China SPAF	www.artsbird.com/en	CHINA: Shanghai	October-November
CINARS	www.cinars.org	CANADA: Montreal, Quebec	November (Biennial)
Classical:Next	www.classicalnext.com	Rotterdam, The Netherlands	May
Folk Alliance	www.folk.org	USA: Various cities	February
IAAPA	www.iaapa.org	Orlando FL, Various cities in Asia and Europe	November (USA) June (Asia) September (Europe)
IAMA	www.iamaworld.com	GLOBAL: Various countries	April
IBMA	www.worldofbluegrass.org	Raleigh NC	September
IETM	www.ietm.org	EUROPE: Various countries	Spring/Autumn
IAFE	www.fairsandexpos.com	USA: Las Vegas NV	November-December
IEBA	www.ieba.org	USA: Nashville TN	October
IFEA	www.ifea.com	USA: Various cities	September
IPAY	www.ipayweb.org	USA: Various cities	January
ISPA	www.ispa.org	GLOBAL: USA & Various	January/June
MIDEM	www.midem.com	FRANCE: Cannes	June
PAMS	http://en.pams.or.kr/	KOREA: Seoul	October
Tanzmesse	https://www.tanzmesse.com/en/	GERMANY: Dusseldorf	August (Biennial)
TPAM	www.tpam.or.jp	JAPAN: Yokohama	April
WOMEX	www.womex.com	EUROPE: Various countries	October

APACA (Australian Performing Arts Centres Association) www.apaca.com.au

APACA's annual conference brings together over 480 members, colleagues, policy makers, international, national and local key speakers to provoke, explore, and debate how we revitalise our sector and our practice. With a Keynote Speaker, showcases, presentations, panels, speakers, APACA also presents the [Performing Arts Exchange](#) (PAX)—an opportunity for presenters and producers to come together in a new format for the national touring market. Networking and touring information events make PAX suitable for all performing arts sector participants.

APAM (Australian Performing Arts Market) www.performingartsmarket.com.au

The Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM) is Australia's leading, internationally focused industry event for contemporary performing arts. Established in 1994 by the [Australia Council for the Arts](#), the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body, APAM showcases and promotes a thriving, diverse national sector and stimulates the ongoing dialogue, collaboration and exchange between local artists and producers and their international counterparts to grow the export of Australian performance. APAM's key purpose continues to be the increase of international and national touring opportunities for Australian contemporary performing arts groups and artists. APAM champions and invests in Australian Arts. This conference provides showcasing opportunities, networking, international market development, national and international touring opportunities and more.

APAP (Association of Performing Arts Professionals) www.apap365.org

Held each January in New York City, the APAP conference is the world's largest networking forum and marketplace for performing arts professionals. More than 3,600 presenters, artists, managers, agents and emerging arts leaders from all 50 U.S. states and more than 30 countries convene in the city for five days of professional development, business deals and exciting performances.

APAP|NYC is the place to feel the pulse of the industry. Plenary speakers such as Stephen Schwartz, Rosanne Cash, Harry Belafonte and Ira Glass inspire attendees. Innovators from various fields share knowledge. Colleagues exchange practices and problem-solving techniques. The popular EXPO Hall is the one-stop networking hotspot with 370 exhibitors. More than 1,000 artist showcases make up a mini festival of the performing arts.

APAP|NYC is the heart of the performing arts industry.

APAP is the national service and membership organization for the performing arts presenting sector and the convener of the world's leading gathering of performing arts professionals each January in New York City. Through professional development programs and member services, APAP provides opportunities for artists, agents and managers, presenters, and producers to make the connections and gain the information, skills, and resources they need to make the arts a vibrant, valuable and sustainable part of everyday life. APAP supports and educates today's and tomorrow's performing arts leaders

AWME (Australasian Worldwide Music Expo) www.awme.com.au

Established in 2008, AWME is a music industry conference and showcase event for roots music. It brings together musicians, industry partners/representatives and festival audiences for three days of non-stop music, networking and conference sessions. Attracting national and international music industry delegates and with a diverse public festival program, AWME creates opportunities for artists from the region to market their product to Australian and international buyers whilst simultaneously offering a platform for audiences to sample an incredible program of music. AWME hosts music industry conference sessions, receptions and workshops featuring expert Australian and international guest speakers from leading festivals, record labels, booking agencies, and arts organisations.

China SPAF (China Shanghai Performing Arts Fair) www.artsbird.com/en

Established in 1999, **China Shanghai International Arts Festival (CSIAF)** is a state-level annual international arts festival hosted by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and undertaken by the Shanghai Municipal People's Government. As a major part of CSIAF for 17 years, the festival's performing arts fair (*ChinaSPAF*) has become the most international and effective event of this kind so far ever held in China, which connects producers and artists of arts festivals, arts centres, theatres, performing companies, agencies and so on in China, Asia-Pacific region as well as other parts of the world. **ChinaSPAF** hosts **600** delegates from **36** countries and regions, including directors from about **50** different international arts festivals and venue presenters from all over mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. It presents **29** live showcases of both Chinese and international programs, both in traditional and contemporary style, including new works by some of the most creative artists and ensembles in China.

CINARS (Conférence Internationale des Arts de la Scène/International Exchange for the Performing Arts) www.cinars.org (Biennial)

Since 1984, CINARS organizes every two years in Montreal, one of the most important international performing arts conferences in the world, with nearly 1300 professionals hailing from 40 countries including 270 show presenters, some of whom are the most influential in the business. During one week, over a hundred shows from Quebec, Canada and abroad grace the stages while workshops, networking events, as well as an exhibition hall are teeming with participants. After 14 editions, the CINARS Biennale has become a key worldwide event in performing arts touring.

Classical:Next www.classicalnext.com

Classical:NEXT is the global networking and exchange hub dedicated exclusively to classical and art music, for all professionals – artists, managers, presenters, orchestras, labels, educators, press, media, publishers and more. Classical:NEXT consists of an interactive conference, project pitches, showcase concerts, expo, innovation award and networking.

Folk Alliance www.folk.org

The Folk Alliance International Conference is the world's largest gathering of the Folk music industry and community (crossing a diverse array of genres including Blues, Bluegrass, Roots, Celtic, Cajun, Appalachian, Traditional, World, and Singer-Songwriter). The annual February conference draws over 2,000 artists and industry (agents, managers, publishers, labels, festival/venue presenters, promoters, media) dedicated to folk music. Delegates who attended the conference represent over 20 countries including the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, Scandinavia, Continental Europe, Mexico, and Japan.

IAAPA (International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions)

www.iaapa.org

IAAPA is the premier trade association representing the diverse and ever-changing attractions industry. IAAPA hosts global events and conferences that spread successful ideas and practices. Founded in 1918, IAAPA represents leading industry attractions and supplier companies, consultants and individual members from more than 100 countries. Members include professionals from amusement parks, theme parks, attractions, water parks, resorts, family entertainment centers, zoos, aquariums, science centers, museums, cruise lines, manufacturers, and suppliers.

IAFE (International Association of Fairs and Expositions) www.fairsandexpos.com

The Annual Convention and Trade Show, held in Las Vegas, is the largest event serving fairs, shows, exhibitions, and expositions. Convention attendees network and learn from each other and top professionals during the intensive four days of workshops, special seminars, round table discussions, and social events. The Trade Show allows companies to showcase themselves while serving as a one-stop shop for all your event's booking, product, and service needs.

IAMA (International Arts Managers Association) www.iamaworld.com

Almost 400 delegates attend this annual conference with guest speakers, panels, live concert performances, presentations, peer-to-peer discussions, panels, breakout sessions, etc.

IBMA (International Bluegrass Music Association) www.ibma.org

IBMA's World of Bluegrass, is a five-day annual bluegrass music homecoming that encompasses four events: the IBMA Business Conference; the Bluegrass Ramble, an innovative series of showcases; the Annual International Bluegrass Music Awards; and Wide Open Bluegrass, a two-day festival.

IEBA (International Entertainment Buyers Association) www.ieba.org

IEBA and its Annual Conference stand alone in the entertainment industry by showcasing a diverse and uniquely-crafted lineup of live entertainment and by providing top-tier informative sessions with the entertainment business's leading decision makers. Beyond the showcases and agency-sponsored parties, attendees have the opportunity to sit down with IEBA's distinguished Board of Directors and other industry experts to discuss the latest trends and hot topics in live entertainment. IEBA's Agents Alley gives entertainment buyers and sellers time together to discuss the specifics of the upcoming touring season. "The Buying Starts Here" slogan originated from this longstanding IEBA tradition.

IETM (Informal European Theatre Meeting/ International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts) www.ietm.org

IETM is a membership organization which exists to stimulate the quality, development and contexts of contemporary performing arts in a global environment. A plenary meeting is the main IETM network meeting organized twice a year (spring and autumn) in different cities, bringing together +/- 500 professionals to exchange ideas in an informal way and build closer relations with various partners/members. Each plenary includes around 25 working sessions and a full performance platform of work from the host country or city.

IFEA (International Festivals and Events Association) www.ifea.com

The IFEA Annual Convention is the top networking event in the field. Here, professionals gather together to share ideas, experiences and opportunities that shape the successes of our common industry and individual events. In the hallways, sessions, and events of the convention you will meet many individuals with a multitude of experiences, challenges, points of view, approaches, leadership styles, and networking connections. Nowhere else will you find so many ideas, so much creativity, and such easy access to the most successful events and event professionals in the world. During the convention you will experience nearly 100 educational sessions by the top experts and success stories in the business.

IPAY (International Performing Arts for Youth) www.ipayweb.org

The annual IPAY Showcase is for **presenters** to see juried Showcase performances by outstanding international performing artists. A wide variety of performances are selected to highlight the many possibilities for young audiences. Showcase is for **artists** to perform, exhibit, and develop their work for an audience of presenters who book shows specifically for young people and their families. Showcase is for **agents and managers** who represent companies and artists that perform work for young people. Each day, Showcase features a dedicated resource room time that serves as a marketplace to discuss and book the work.

Showcase is for **students** to network with the premier professionals in the performing arts for youth field and to learn about important issues and initiatives in our professional development learning communities.

ISPA (International Society for the Performing Arts) www.ispa.org

ISPA is a global network of more than 450 leaders in the performing arts with representation from more than 185 cities and all regions of the globe. ISPA members include facilities, performing arts organizations, artist managers, competitions, funders, consultants and other professionals working in the performing arts. ISPA Congresses are attended by more than 500 leaders from more than 50 countries representing different cultures and disciplines within the performing arts field. Programming is geared toward administrators, presenter, managers, agents, artists and government/cultural leaders.

MIDEM (Marché International du Disque et de l'Édition Musicale)

www.midem.com

Join 5,500 participants and 1,100 exhibiting companies from 75 countries, to expand your **international network**, **create bridges with other industries**, **improve your practices**, **sign deals** and **take your business to the next level**.



PAMS (Performing Arts Market in Seoul) <http://en.pams.or.kr/>

Under the auspices of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korea Arts Management Service has been hosting PAMS(Performing Arts Market in Seoul) every October. The primary objects of PAMS are revitalization of rational distribution and exportation to oversea markets for Korean performing arts that based on diversified orientation and creation. Through the diverse programs of PAMS as showcases of selected performing arts, booth exhibitions for the promotion of art works and artistic groups, varied symposium and networking programs, all the performing arts experts are able to share the information of field and global trends for encouragement of creation and provision of performing arts. International and regional showcases, focus sessions, roundtables, speed dating networking and connecting with international partners, exhibit booths.

Tanzmesse www.tanzmesse.com/en/

The **internationale tanzmesse nrw** hosts the largest professional gathering dedicated exclusively to contemporary dance. The internationale tanzmesse nrw takes place every two years, generally at the end of August, in Düsseldorf, Germany. The **Exhibition Halls** of the Tanzmesse are a space where companies, artists, local governments and agencies can present the work they do or represent artists. The Exhibition Halls are organised in differently sized booths, which international professionals can visit during the opening hours. The **Performance Programme** of the Tanzmesse is an opportunity for Tanzmesse Exhibitors to present their work live, in the shape of fully produced performances or in the form of Open Studios, on 11 of the best stages for dance in Düsseldorf. The artistic programme is a selection of performances chosen from proposals submitted by artists. The **debates and information sessions** present opportunities for Tanzmesse participants to network in smaller groups on specific and practical topics.

TPAM (Tokyo Performing Arts Market) www.tpam.or.jp

Launched as “Tokyo Performing Arts Market” in 1995. As the name “Market” indicates, its objective was to promote trading of performing arts works. However, in 2005, it started to focus more on networking of professionals engaging in contemporary performing arts. In 2011, it moved to Yokohama, changed the name from “Market” to “Meeting” and became “Performing Arts Meeting in Yokohama,” while keeping the nickname “TPAM.” During the 9-day period, professionals who engage in performing arts get together beyond national and regional borders to share information, mutually learn and build network through diverse programs including showings, discussions and meetings.

WOMEX (World Music Expo) www.womex.com

WOMEX is an international networking platform for the world music industry. The annual five-day event comprises a bustling Trade Fair, Showcase Festival, Conference, and Film programme, as well as festive Opening and Award ceremonies.

How to Prepare for a Conference

1. A conference should be part of your overall career plan and each conference you attend should be a part of this plan. When I wanted to expand my business from Canada into the United States, I started with a conference in the north eastern part of the United States – NEPAC (now defunct). It was the closest conference geographically to me and so it made sense economically. I exhibited there and had artists showcasing there and over the ensuing years I gradually expanded my reach into the United States until I was attending selected national, regional, state and specialized conferences which fit into my expansion plans and my artist roster. With international conferences you will have to choose your focus and the plan on attending the appropriate event for several years in order to develop the connections you will need.
2. Do some pre-conference research: go through each email you receive about the conference and any printed material the conference sends you. Know what the conference schedule is and make a tentative plan for your time at the conference. You may also have time to explore the city/area in which the conference takes place.
3. Find out who the main speakers are and get some information on them. Connecting with industry leaders is a good strategy.
4. Check the attendees list (if available) and determine with whom you'd like to connect. You can certainly send out emails (or postcards, etc.) but be aware that right before a conference attendees are inundated with materials and emails and most of them end up in the garbage or recycle bin. It is much better to build up a relationship over time and then the conference can be an opportunity to connect with someone with whom you already have a relationship.
5. Register early for the conference to take advantage of any discounts offered for early-bird registration. And reserve your flights in plenty of time.

6. Plan on staying at the conference hotel. This will allow you to network most effectively. There is usually cheaper accommodation available but it is often at a distance and entails transportation costs and just getting back and forth will increase your level of fatigue.
7. Find out what the weather will be like at the conference location and bring suitable clothing with you. It's always a good idea to take along something dressy for a closing party or an off-site event.
8. Bring PLENTY of business cards.
9. You may want to bring headache or upset stomach medications, water, and workout clothes/running shoes for the Fitness Center. (Don't forget your phone charger and international electrical adapter). Get the appropriate foreign currency before the trip.
10. Bring materials for taking notes and keeping track of the connections you make.
11. Bring information such as a brochure on your venue (presenters) or artist one-sheets, roster listings, press kits, etc. (agents, managers).

How to Work a Conference

The goals of attending a conference should be **learning** and **connecting**. There are a multitude of opportunities at every conference to learn: keynote speakers, panels, roundtable sessions, workshops, etc. Attend as many events as you can and increase your knowledge of the performing arts field. Conferences are all about networking as well. The connections you make at a conference can lead to more and better business opportunities and life-long friendships.

1. Plan on taking as active a part in the conference as possible. Be a volunteer. Be a mentor. At every conference I attend, I volunteer to assist with Professional Development sessions, helping to hand out materials and evaluation forms at the door. I got to meet a lot of people and became a fixture at each conference. I also enjoy mentoring at conferences – helping newbies negotiate a conference and achieving their goals.
2. Have goals in mind for attending the conference. You have to choose your activities with these goals in mind. Are you hoping to acquire representation? (Identify those agents/managers with whom you would have a rapport and fit into their roster.) Get booked in certain geographical areas? (Identify venues from a certain part of the country. Investigate the possibility of block-booking with them.) At certain venues? (Find out all you can about the venue – background, history, age, mission, achievements, staff, etc. and demonstrate your interest and knowledge in discussions with the venues' representatives.) Increase your knowledge of a particular part of the industry? (Choose which professional development sessions will be of most use to you.) Plan accordingly.
3. Have real conversations with people. Don't just promote yourself or hand out materials or business cards without first of all making a real connection. Ask meaningful questions and listen to the answers. Maintain eye contact, relax, and let them do the talking. People remember people who are interested in them and what they do as opposed to people who only talk about themselves. Showing that you are interested in the other person is the start of a beautiful friendship.

4. Remember that opportunities to connect can take place at social events as well. Plan on attending as many of the conference's events as possible, including meals or other events which may require additional expense. Connecting with people will take place not only in the exhibit hall, but in the elevators, at showcases, in the bar, in the hotel lobby, on a bus, at a professional development session, during a social event, etc.
5. Keep track of the people with whom you connect. Try to exchange business cards and, at the first opportunity, record the gist of your conversations, or how you will follow up this connection.
6. Dress according to your style and the norms for the conference. Some people feel that business attire is de rigueur for agents or manager, while presenters may be dressed according to their normal mode of dress, be it casual or otherwise. Artists often dress "artistically." In any case, you should dress so as to make a good first impression.
7. Conferences days are extremely busy and usually packed from early morning to late at night. If you are staying at the conference hotel, you can retreat to your room periodically to refresh yourself. Be sure to bring a supply of breath mints, make-up items, etc. to keep you fresh throughout the day.
8. Have a prepared "elevator speech" ready. Everyone is rushed at a conference and will expect, in 25 words or less essentially, to find out who you are, what you do and why they should continue the conversation with you. Listen carefully to how they respond, since it may provide you with an opening to carry on the conversation.
9. When you attend professional development sessions of any kind, take an active part. Ask questions and/or contribute to the session in a positive way.

10. Wear your name tag or ID badge properly, so that it can be seen at all times, especially when you are seated at a dining table. Wear it high and wear it proud!

Follow-up

1. Send an email to everyone with whom you connected at the conference. Remind them of your conversation and detail if you are sending them information or materials by mail or courier. If appropriate, share your knowledge and experience with them.
2. Use social media to connect with people and/or to report on your experiences at the conference (you could do this during the conference as well.) Name names and make positive comments.
3. Stay in touch by phone or email after the conference. It can sometimes take years before the right opportunity arises for you and your connection to make something happen. People change job positions frequently these days and that connection you made a while back may now be in a position to assist your career goals.

Final Thoughts

Once you've attended a conference, you will have a much better idea of its value for you. You may decide that a conference is not an annual event, but should be on your agenda every second or third year. You may find a conference with which you'd like to be more involved (Serve on its Board, contribute to a professional development session, etc.). Conferences should be an important part of your professional life. Go. Experience.

International conferences require adaptations to cultural sensitivities in different parts of the world. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Relationships are based on trust and business contacts are personalized.
2. Leadership styles often involve levels in hierarchies.
3. Respectful attention must be paid to protocol: don't hurry an agenda.
4. It will take time (measured in years often) to develop relationships.
5. Do some research on social practices and communication styles. ("Saving face" is an absolute must for Chinese business and involves different strategies).
6. Learn a few key phrases in the appropriate foreign language.
7. Change your vocabulary to suit the situation: Europeans generally do not refer to an arts "market" since they focus on "art".
8. Know something about the history of other countries. Indigenous cultures may be a factor in the tradition of the arts.
9. Be aware of the necessary regulations for working in a foreign country (visas, travel restrictions, performance licenses, permits, taxation, etc.)
10. Understand the situation from the other person's point of view. You may need to have recommendations from colleagues the other person trusts and they may want to see the show before they can commit to it for their programming.

Above all, be sensitive to the nuances of doing business in a foreign culture.

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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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