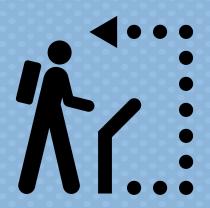
BAM! Complete Guide to the College Market - Canada

by Robert Baird



#18

A guide to the college market in Canada for artists, agents and managers

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Introduction

This guide is for artists who wish perform in the college market in Canada. It is specifically geared to student activities at colleges or universities, and not to community or departmental programs at colleges and universities. Community and departmental programs are usually administered by paid staff or as part of departmental duties and accessing those programs for performing artists can be better accomplished by attending national or regional conferences (see: BAM! Complete Guide to Conferences - Canada). The student activities part of the college market is not for everyone and it can be difficult, but for some artists it can prove to be a satisfying and lucrative area. First of all, an artist (or artist agent/manager) must determine the suitability of the artist for the college market, decide that the investment in the market may be worth the return and then formulate a plan to enter the market.

The College Market

The college market is a student market and schools are very sensitive to appropriate activities and behaviors on campus. The college market by its very nature is a changing market. The students who serve on student activities boards graduate and are replaced, often annually. The artistic tastes of students are formed by their youth and current societal norms. In terms of music, they are usually looking for young bands; for speakers or comedians, they tend to look for slightly older performers. Generally, they are looking for "fun" acts which will provide their audience with a good time and will be skilled at interacting in a positive way with the audience. In addition, they will be open to new sounds and unusual acts. If the students involved in college booking like an artist, then staff advisors will normally go along with their choices. On the plus side, budgets are fairly reasonable (although many are on the low side) and college campuses do have many good performing spaces.

Suitability for the College Market

If you are or represent a youthful artistic group who can provide fun-filled, lively entertainment at a college event, then this market is for you. Your marketing material should emphasize your ability to entertain (testimonials from presenters, other colleges, etc.) and confirm your responsible and pristine character – colleges abhor controversy and need to feel confident that the artist will not cause them any problems of any kind. An artist also needs to be extremely flexible. The actual gig, in terms of audience, technical equipment available, venue, etc. may vary from descriptions and expectations and you have to be able to roll with the punches. Hecklers and bored or stressed-out students may be encountered and whatever happens, the show must go on. Remember that you are most likely not dealing with professionals and maintain a cheerful disposition at all times. Consider offering different versions of your act: if you normally perform as a 4- or 5-piece band, offer a duo or solo version. This will make you

more attractive and fit you into various budget levels, which can vary according to the college or series. Finally, you need patience – it can take a while to get gigs in the college market and you have to commit to participating in the market no matter what transpires. Start by getting involved in the college market organization:

Canadian Organization of Campus Activities (COCA)

www.coca.org

The Canadian Organization of Campus Activities (COCA) represents more than 60 member post-secondary institutions across Canada. Its Mission Statement: The Canadian Organization of Campus Activities is committed to developing quality campus programming through education, information sharing, and resources. COCA is further dedicated to enhancing skill development by providing educational and business opportunities, resources, and services for professional staff, college and university students, and associate members of COCA. If you are interested in the college market in Canada, this is the organization to join.

Joining COCA

COCA Associate Fees

COCA Associate fees for Companies (e.g. agencies, campus suppliers, associations, etc.)

CAD \$335 per year (anniversary dates: June 1 and November 1). COCA Associate status allows for one company profile in the on-line Directory and up to 4 personal contact profiles for individuals connected to the company. Associate Companies with 2 or more offices must register a membership for each office in order to have the second office listed in the Directory.

COCA Associate Status for Artists (music acts, variety acts, comedians, speakers, etc.)

CAD \$175 per year (anniversary dates: June 1 and November 1). COCA Associate status allows for one artist profile in the on-line Directory and up to 2 personal contact profiles for individuals connected to the act.

The combined Federal and Ontario HST tax (13%) must be added to all fees and services.

Optional Fees:

Listings under more than one category in the on-line Directory cost \$25 each.

COCA Checklist of Services & Benefits for Associates

- Free listing in COCA's on-line Directory. Choose from 24 categories for your company or artist profile to appear.
- Access 24/7 to the members-only section of the COCA Web Site including the Directory.
- Invitation to the National Conference held annually in June.
- Invitation to the Central Regional Conference. (Normally held in November during the academic year).
- Excellent networking opportunities with Campus Buyers and other COCA Associates.
- Free subscription to COCA Notes (COCA's online newsletter) published 3-4 times per year.
- Email address added to the COCA Associates List Serve.
- Communicate by email with COCA Schools through the Contact Center feature of COCA's interactive Directory.
- Opportunity to have your company or artist listing appear under 1 or 2 additional categories within the on-line Directory.
- Complimentary link to your Website from your profile in the COCA Directory.
- Opportunity to become a "COCA Sponsor".
- Advertising opportunities in COCA Notes, on the COCA web site, and in conference manuals.
- Entertainment Showcase opportunities at COCA conferences.
- Participate in the Campus Activities Biz Hall (trade show) at conferences.
- Leadership opportunities for COCA Associates who are interested.
- Benefit from educational & professional development sessions at conferences.
- Contact information for COCA school members updated regularly in the on-line Directory.

COCA National Conference

The COCA National Conference is held annually in the month of June and is the highlight of the year for COCA members. It serves as an opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, participate in professional development through the education program, and conduct business with associate members and artists who have been selected to showcase during the conference.

Please click on one of the choices available in the menu under National Conference to see details of the upcoming national conference, the immediate past national conference, and the dates and location of future conferences. If the information provided does not answer all your questions, please contact the Executive Director or the National Conference Chair.

Contact COCA

Staff

Earle Taylor, Executive Director

Mailing Address

Canadian Organization of Campus Activities
509 Commissioners Rd. W., Suite 202

London, Ontario, Canada N6J 1Y5

Telephone
(519) 690-0207

Facsimile

Join the COCA Mailing List

Email Directors or Staff

(519) 681-4328

If you'd like to receive information about conferences, education programs, inter-campus events and showcase opportunities, <u>click here</u> to add your name to our general email list.

COCA Showcases

All acts (music, comedy, variety & lecture) must submit their showcase applications using the on-line showcase application form. For agencies who wish to submit multiple showcase applications, the on-line form allows for up to 20 acts to be submitted at one time. A new form can be opened at another time to submit additional acts.

The application fee is CAD \$35 per act plus 13% HST tax. Payment must be made by credit card to complete each submission whether that submission is for 1 act or 20. Credit cards accepted are: Amex, Discovery, MasterCard, and Visa.

Expose your act to the Canadian college and university market.

Founded in 1982, the Canadian Organization of Campus Activities (COCA) is the only association dedicated purely to campus activities programming in Canada. The COCA National Conference provides an excellent opportunity for colleges & universities, booking agencies and self-represented artists to gather together, network, showcase, exhibit and conduct business. **More than 25 showcase opportunities are available** in various categories.

COCA is the place to be to get in front of Canadian campus activities planners! More than 140 student and staff buyers ("school" delegates) from approximately 55 schools across the country are expected to attend the **COCA National Conference.** In addition, more than 80 "associate" delegates representing 50 companies and artists will be represented in the Campus Activities Biz Hall, COCA's trade show.

Artists that are selected to showcase must become COCA Associates or be represented by a company that is, or will become, a COCA Associate. All selected showcase acts must be represented in the trade show either by the act itself or by a company representing the act. Associate Membership (1-year) and Associate Conference Registration (for trade show & delegate pass) forms are available on the COCA Web site under: Events – National Conference.

Attention Canadian Artists: There are a number of organizations such as FACTOR and provincial music industry associations that assist music artists with travel expenses involved with showcasing at "contact" events such as the COCA National Conference. You can find links to some of these organizations by going on the COCA website.

Date & Location: Various Canadian cities, annually in June.

Showcase Deadlines:

Showcase Application Deadline: Usually 3 months before conference Showcase Selections: announced by 2½ months before conference..

Showcase Submissions:

Artists of all types MUST apply online. Showcase application form preview

Showcase Fees

Showcasing at a COCA conference involves several fees. The fees that apply depend on whether an act is "self-represented" or whether the act will be "represented" by a company that will attend the Conference. If selected to showcase, all acts must pay all applicable fees by the deadline or risk losing their showcase spot. For a full explanation of these fees, check out "Fees" on the COCA website under "Showcase Info" at the bottom of the page.

Please note: If you have any questions about the fees paid to COCA for Showcasing, Associate Membership, or Conference Registration (trade show booth & delegate pass), please direct them to the

COCA Office at 519-690-0207 or by email through the Contact button on the COCA website.

Official Website: http://www.coca.org (Events – National Conference)

Showcase Fees

Fees for Showcase Acts

Any artist selected to showcase must be, or become, an Associate Member of COCA or have the company representing them at the conference be, or become, an Associate Member. Also, every showcase artist MUST be represented in the COCA trade show (The Biz Hall). The trade show booth, with delegate pass, may be booked by the act, OR by the company representing the act at the conference. See fees outlined in sections B and C below. If your act is selected to showcase, please note that the following fees must be received at the COCA office **by the deadline** or you risk losing your showcase spot.

For "Represented Acts", fees from the agency or company representing the act at the Conference must also be received by the deadline or the act may lose its showcase spot.

A - All Acts - Showcase Application Fee (non-refundable)

1. On-line applications only – CAD \$35 per act – paid at the time of on-line submission by credit card: Visa, MasterCard, Amex, or Discovery.

B - Self-Represented Acts

From the Act

- 1. Showcase Fee \$275.00 + 13% HST tax
- 2. COCA Associate Membership Fee (reduced special artist rate saves 48%) \$175.00 + HST tax 3a. Conference Registration Fee (incl. shared booth, 1 delegate) exact amount varies per options on conference registration form minimum \$295.00 + HST tax

OR

3b. Conference Fee (incl. full booth, 2 delegates) – amount varies per options on conference registration form – minimum \$505.00 + HST tax

C - Represented Acts

From the Act

1. Showcase Fee – \$275.00 + 13% HST tax

From the Company Representing the Act

- 2. COCA Associate Membership Fee (if new or if current membership expires before June 1) \$335.00 + 13% HST tax
- 3. Conference Registration Fee (incl. full booth, 1 or 2 delegates) amount varies per options on conference registration form minimum \$505.00 + HST tax

The COCA Associate Form (membership) – artist or company version – AND the Conference Registration Form (trade show booth & delegate pass) are available on the COCA Web site at www.coca.org Click on: Events – National Conference. Scroll down to the "Associates" section at the bottom of the page.

Showcase Types

Please note that COCA reserves the right to combine showcase types or even eliminate a particular showcase from the schedule should there be an inadequate number of applicants. All showcase spots are 20 minutes of performance time except Comedy which is 15 minutes. The Singer/Songwriter Showcase, Showcase MC, and Roving Artist Showcases all have different formats that don't allow for precise performance times to be established.

The following are brief descriptions of each of the showcase types:

1. Mainstage Showcase

Usually scheduled in the evening (8 pm to midnight), involves entertainers of all types except lecture. Artists of all music genres, spoken word, comedy and variety may be scheduled on a Mainstage Showcase. A variation is the **Revolver Showcase** which simply means that 2 showcase rooms are scheduled at the same time but performance start times are staggered so delegates have the opportunity to see all performances.

2. DJ/Urban/Electronic Showcase

Modeled after a regular Mainstage Showcase, the DJ/Urban/Electronic Showcase gives DJ's and electronic acts 20 minutes of performance time.

3. Singer/Songwriter Showcase

This showcase is run in the traditional singer/songwriter circle format – in rotation, performers each do one song and continue until showcase time has expired. In general, each artist will perform 4 or 5 songs.

4. Comedy Showcase

Stand-up comedy - 15 minute performance spots.

5. Variety Showcase

Sometimes combined with the Comedy Showcase or the Lecture Showcase. Examples of variety acts are: hypnosis, juggling, acrobatics, spoken word, musical comedy, improv comedy, circus side shows, etc.

6. Lecture Showcase

The artist must tour as a lecturer or guest speaker.

7. Showcase MC

Showcase MC's may be scheduled for Mainstage, Comedy, Variety and Lecture showcases. MC's are given a 10-minute opening spot and 2-3 minutes between each showcase act. Showcase MC's in the past have been: comedians, lecturers, variety acts, and musical-comedy artists.

8. Roving Artist Showcase

Scheduled during the registration period on opening day plus one additional period in the conference schedule, roving artists may be small musical acts performing acoustically in the registration area, and variety acts such as acrobats, jugglers, etc.

COCA Showcase Policies

1. Membership

Any artist selected to showcase must be or become an Associate Member of COCA or be represented at the conference by a company that is or will become an Associate Member of COCA. Memberships must be in good standing during the conference. Self-represented artists will be offered a discount on the annual associate membership fee as determined by the COCA Board.

2. Campus Activities Business Hall (aka: Biz Hall)

Any artist selected to showcase must be represented in the conference trade show either by the company that books the act or by the artist him or herself. Self-represented artists will be permitted to share a trade show booth with another artist at a rate determined by the COCA Board.

3. Showcase Performance Times

Each showcasing artist is allowed 20 minutes of performance time except comedy artists who receive 15 minutes of performance time. Stage and equipment set-up time is not included in the performance time.

4. Showcase Selection Committee

The showcase selection committee has the sole authority to select showcasing artists (other than the acts that showcase as part of a sponsorship package).

5. Production Manager

The conference chair will appoint a showcase production manager.

6. Showcase Agreement

All showcasing artists selected to showcase must sign an agreement regarding their showcase appearance and pay a showcase fee.

7. Deadlines

The showcase selection committee has the following deadlines to meet for the national conference: the application deadline will not be less than 10 weeks prior to the date of the conference. Notification of the decision of the showcase selection committee shall be sent to each applicant not less than 7 weeks prior to the date of the conference.

8. Cancellations & Representation

No substitutions will be allowed on the showcase. If the attraction is unable to appear, the associate member firm submitting the attraction loses its fee and forfeits its time slot. If the showcase act severs its business relationship with the associate member prior to the showcase, the attraction may still appear as scheduled only if they become an associate member and pay the appropriate fees (membership, showcase, exhibitor).

9. Booking Contact

An associate member that has an act selected to showcase must be the only booking contact for the act during the conference.

10. Refunds

In the event that the act is not accepted for a showcase, the showcase fee, if paid in advance, will be refunded, save for a showcase application fee set by the Board. The associate member then has two weeks to cancel in order to receive a full refund on conference registration, if paid in advance. In the event that an alternate performing artist is selected to showcase, that act may cancel with full refund of any fees paid in advance, save the showcase application fee, within one week of notification.

11. Illegal Showcase

Any live performance during the conference, promoted or advertised directly to conference delegates, that occurs outside the officially scheduled program of the conference may be considered an illegal showcase. The Board may exercise disciplinary hearings and impose any penalty provided for in the grievance procedure.

12. Production

Professional production will be provided for all showcases. Details will be communicated to all showcase acts in advance of the conference. If COCA determines that backline will be provided at any conference, all music showcase acts are required to use the backline equipment provided and will not be permitted to use their own stage gear.

13. Personnel

The conference chair will provide necessary technicians and stagehands.

14. Control of Sound & Lights

Acts may have their own personnel operate the sound and lights provided these individuals are qualified to do so. The main volume control and the power supply for the lights will be under final and absolute control of the Production Manager.

15. Stage Set-Up and Special Effects

Each act must provide a stage plot with their showcase applications. Stage plots will include scaled diagram of position of all equipment, and complete list of equipment arriving. Technicians are required to operate: sound, lights, and monitors. The Production Manager may, at his discretion, refuse any prop or special effect. Requests for special effects or special set ups must be made in advance.

16. Information Meetings

Representatives for all showcase acts may be required to attend an information meeting on the day of their showcase: time and place to be announced. Failure to comply with this requirement may forfeit the act's right to appear.

17. Regulations and Guests

Representatives of performing artists are responsible for making their artists fully aware of all conference regulations. In particular, conference ID's may not be transferred. Unauthorized use of artist ID's or passes issued to guests of artists will result in individuals involved being asked to leave the conference area. They will not be permitted to re-enter under any circumstances. Guest passes must be requested at least 5 days prior to the start of the conference by contacting the COCA office.

18. Showcase Duration & Penalty for exceeding Time Limit

Because of the very tight showcase schedule, each act must not exceed the maximum of twenty (20) minutes performance time; 15 minutes for comedy acts. When 18 minutes has elapsed, a yellow warning light will be lit. At 20 minutes a red light will be turned on. Once 22 minutes has elapsed, the lights and sound will be turned off. Avoid embarrassing your act. DO NOT EXCEED THE TIME LIMIT. For comedy artists, the corresponding warnings will be given at 13 minutes, 15 minutes, and 17 minutes.

19. Other Regulations

All regulations and schedules outlined on the Showcase Information sheet, Showcase Application form, Load-In Times sheet and Showcase Order & Sound check Times sheet will be strictly adhered to. These will be sent with notification of acceptance of showcase applications.

20. Singer/Songwriter Circle

The Singer/Songwriter Circle will be classified as a showcase, but the following special provisions may apply: The showcase selection committee, in conjunction with the board, may

appoint a singer/songwriter showcase chair. This person can participate in the selection of the singer/songwriter showcase acts, and can work closely with the conference chair, and the education sessions committee chair to seek out, and fund when needed, a high profile artist to emcee and/or participate in the showcase. This position will be exempt from the 3-year maximum selection committee member rule.

Getting an Agent

Getting an agent is a difficult proposition for most artists. And getting an agent that specializes in the college market can be even more of a challenge. My best advice is that you attend the National Conference and go and see which agents are there and what kinds of acts they represent. Protocol dictates that you do NOT approach them at the conference for discussing representation, but you can offer them an EPK and a business card and make a note of the ones who might fit your act and contact them after the conference for a discussion of whether they might represent you or not. Agents are generally looking for something unique in your act that will make it easier for them to get you bookings. All artists are, of course, unique but you need to have something that makes you stand out above the crowd. Learn the ropes by attending conferences and don't hesitate to ask around about agents and their track record. In the end the artist-agent or artist-manager relationship has to be win-win for both and I always advise people to go with their gut – it's a relationship that needs to feel good on the gut level.

Self-promoting

Often the best promoter of an artist is the artist. Given my experience in the field, it is a waste of time to try calling colleges to try to get bookings. Phone calls rarely connect and are seldom returned. Emails are ignored. Do NOT send out promo kits, in the hopes of securing bookings. Simply send out a one-page flier highlighting what you do, with a bit of bio, experience and testimonials. Print material is usually scanned by the recipient, often tossed out, but there are those who will glean something from it and follow up with you for a booking. Remember that you have be patient, consistent and persistent. There are resources out there to help:

The Musician's Atlas

<u>Indie on the Move</u>

The Indie Bible

Showcases

Getting a showcase at any conference is highly competitive and you need to have extremely professional promotional material to even be considered. The key promotional vehicle for the college market is your video. It should be the most awesome three minutes of video that the

showcase committee has ever seen. If you are going to put money into promotion, then start with your video and make it comparable to the many music and other artist videos shown on commercial television.

General Promotion

In addition to an awesome video, your promotional portfolio must include a current and easy-to-navigate website, professional-looking 4-colour fliers, posters, postcards, professional CDs and/or DVDs, a complete EPK, a one-sheet, a professional business card, a current biography, and promotional hi-res photos. In addition, the use of as much social media as you can master is key to promoting you and your work. Stream your music, have a YouTube channel for your videos, offer free giveaways, maintain any connections you make at colleges or universities where you perform.

Maintain Connections

Once you've done a show at a college, maintain that connection on an ongoing basis by keeping in touch and letting them know what you are up to. You should also contact other colleges or universities for a proposed tour routing and use the work you've already done to impress upon other colleges that you are active in this market. Get as many testimonials as you can from colleges where you have performed and use them in your promotion.

Enhancing your College Booking

Once you have a booking, here are some ways to make the most of your time on campus:

- 1. Contact the music, theatre, women's studies, etc. and offer to do a lecture or a master class. This outreach will increase your presence on campus and may pay you an additional fee, as well as advertising your upcoming gig.
- 2. Investigate the on-campus college radio and off to do an interview and send them some free CDs for airplay. The <u>College Music Journal</u>, can be an important resource.
- 3. Contact local media and try to get an article or notice of your upcoming gig or see if they will do an interview.
- 4. Provide a press release to the local media.
- 5. Provide give-away CDs to local media.

Doing On-Campus Promotion

1. Provide posters with a space at the bottom for specific information on your campus appearance.

- 2. Contact any associations, clubs, teams, councils, etc. and invite them to attend your concert.
- 3. Provide give-away CDs or other merchandise for on-campus promotion.
- 4. Provide smaller fliers for cafeteria, library tables, and other gathering places.
- 5. Place an ad in the campus newspaper (if your budget allows).
- 6. Advertise on the campus radio station (if your budget allows).
- 7. Provide a press release to campus newspapers or other print opportunities.
- 8. Try to get air play on campus and publicity (e.g. an interview).
- 9. Contact other schools in the area and invite them to attend. Provide complimentary tickets if necessary.
- 10. Do promotional activities at nearby schools as well (posters, media, fliers, etc.)
- 11. Offer themed programs which can be tied in to homecoming, sports events, orientation events, etc.
- 12. Make sure that your event is featured in any on-campus listings.

Conclusion

The college market requires dogged determination and planning but it gives you an opportunity to develop your career– get the students as fans at college and you'll have them as fans for life.

Check out the other titles in the

BAM! COMPLETE GUIDES SERIES

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All Guides are or will be available for download from the BAM! Baird Artists Management 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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