



Visiting Arts Information Sheet

Tips for approaching music producers and presenters in the UK

Research and Resources

If you want to perform in the UK it is essential to find out as much information as possible about music venues, networks, producers and festivals in the UK before contacting promoters. Research and planning should enable you to focus your efforts on promoters that are interested in your type of work or work from your country/region. Your research may take the form of Internet research, looking at publications, networking, and telephone or face-to-face conversations.

- To avoid wasting your own time and resources, carry out careful research into the individuals, companies and organisations that you wish to contact. A few well-directed letters will prove more successful than sending out masses of unsolicited material (material that has not been requested).
- Find out as much information as you can about the promoters and producers, venues and companies before contacting them: their interests, work they have previously promoted/presented, the types of audience they seek to attract, the venues they regularly work with etc. If you find that a venue has previously presented similar work to yours (or work from your country/region), find out which promoter organised the performances.
- Familiarise yourself with the UK music press and music-related television and radio programming. The BBC's website may be a good place to start: www.bbc.co.uk/music/.
- Find out about the live music circuit in the UK and research touring venues and festivals. For details of venues in the UK, you will need to purchase the British & International Music Yearbook, which now comes in two volumes and contains details of over 18,000 organisations and performers from every sector of the music industry both in the UK and, increasingly, abroad: UK £33.50 – Europe £38 – Worldwide £46
www.rhinegold.co.uk/yearbooks/bimyb/index.cfm

The following links may help you start your search:

www.gig-guide.co.uk/pages/music-venues.php Gig-Guide's list of live music venues

www.artscouncil.org.uk/regions Visit each region's home page then follow the links to seek details of venues and festivals – you can also search using key phrases such as dance/drama/theatre

www.wai.org.uk/index.cfm?alias=import Wales Arts International's site includes information and contact details for venues and festivals in Wales

www.britishcouncil.org/arts-performing-arts-acd-directory.htm British Council Arts and Culture for Development Directory of UK practitioners interested in collaborating on international projects.

www.scottishartstouring.com - Scottish Arts Council database of venues for touring. Also features a database of Scottish promoters.



Expectations

Good research should enable you to assess your own expectations as well as the expectations of UK promoters and UK audiences.

- Be realistic with your timetable: venues and promoters usually programme their events a minimum of six months (and often a year or more) in advance.
- Try to gather information from other performers/groups from your country that have visited or performed in the UK. Their first-hand experience, contacts and opinions could be useful.
- Promoters in the UK (like promoters worldwide) will often be seeking to make a profit. This may be to enable them to maintain and develop a broad programme of work appearing at their venue or may simply be for commercial reasons. Be aware that a promoter may require your assistance in publicising any performances.
- Try to think in terms of what a programmer might be looking for or what they would expect to see. Aim to tailor your proposal to the interests of each individual producer or company.
- Be ready to negotiate - you need to be clear as to your basic needs (travel, fees, staffing, accommodation etc). When it comes to contracts it is important to be clear as to what the promoter or venue is providing as part of a contract and what they are not. Begin to think about the logistics of performing and touring in the UK and what may be required of you. Think about necessary documentation and official procedures: work permits, visas, contracts, taxation. See Visiting Arts' online publication *Cutting Through the Red Tape* for information on these and other practical issues (www.visitingarts.org.uk/info_resources)

Contacts and Networks

- Work to establish professional contacts with the individuals and organisations that you have identified through your research. Having contacts in the UK might also help you to find out when UK promoters are visiting your country.
- Networking and meeting people face-to-face is an excellent way of establishing contacts and finding out who you should be talking to and how. Look out for networking events that you could attend and consider joining networks specific to your interests. Building relationships of trust and respect with your contacts is crucial.
- Where possible, seek advice from your embassy or High Commission in the UK to find out if its' staff has any knowledge, experience or contacts that could be useful. A comprehensive list of embassies in the UK is available on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's web site: www.fco.gov.uk.
- The UK government's Department for Culture, Media & Sport (www.culture.gov.uk) has a 'Guide to Arts Funding in England' on its website that will give you an idea of the nature and structure of arts funding in the UK.
- Look for any national foundations or trusts that could be approached for financial support, or advice and information.
- Try to gather information from other performers/companies from your country who have visited the UK. Their first-hand experience and contacts could prove valuable.



- By forging partnerships with venues and promoters you should ensure that your UK collaborator has an interest and investment in the success of your work. Without shared risk and shared excitement about the project you may not be able to rely on your partner(s) to assist with the promotion and marketing of your work which could prove disastrous.

Getting in Touch

- If sending unsolicited material, artists should include limited information on themselves, their work, history, any awards received, and a page or two of critical writing (e.g. reviews).
- Include a brief outline of the technical specifications necessary for a performance: for
- example, state the total number of performers, number of people travelling, number of monitors and amplifiers required, number and types of microphone required. Have more details available should a promoter ask for further information.
- Include photographs and printed material to give visual appeal and colour to your work.
- As programmers are often swamped with unsolicited material, don't send items such as videos or DVDs at first – no programmer has the time to sit through recorded performances of all the work they get sent. A CD should suffice as would directing them to downloads from a website.
- When contacting a producer, mention any financial support you have obtained from organisations in your home country.
- Address your letter directly to the specific, appropriate individual at the company/venue.
- If an individual has recommended that you contact a particular person/company include the name of that individual in your letter.
- Your letter should be clear, enthusiastic and brief; avoid exaggeration and hype.
- Include *all* your contact details - make it easy for someone to get in touch with you.

Visiting Arts resources

- Our free monthly e-newsletter has the latest information on our activities, along with a whole host of other news on the international arts and culture scene from the UK and abroad - *funding opportunities, calls for artists, festivals, conferences, exhibitions... etc.*
<http://www.visitingarts.org.uk/subscribe.html>
- www.visitingarts.org.uk/info_resources for news on funding sources, links to key organisations and cultural centres and useful help sheets and guides when presenting arts in the UK



Online

Arts Council England: www.artscouncil.org.uk (site contains information sheets and publications that may be of assistance, as well as contact details for regional offices).

Arts Council of Wales: www.artswales.org

Arts Council of Northern Ireland: www.artscouncil-ni.org

The British & International Federation of Festivals: www.festivals.demon.co.uk

British Arts Festivals Association: www.artsfestivals.co.uk

British Music Industry Directory: www.music-directory.co.uk

British Music Information Centre: www.bmic.co.uk

European Festival Information Centre: www.euro-festival.net

European Music Council: www.european-music-council.org

European Music Office: www.emo.org

The European Network of Information Centres for the Performing Arts:
www.enicpa.net

Folk Arts England: www.folkarts-england.org

International Festivals & Events Association: www.ifeaeurope.com

Musicians' Union: www.musiciansunion.org.uk

Musictank: www.musictank.co.uk

The MCPS-PRS Alliance is the home of the world's best songwriters, composers and music publishers: www.mcps-prs-alliance.co.uk/Pages/default.aspx

Scottish Arts Council: www.scottisharts.org.uk

Sonic Arts Network: www.sonicartsnetwork.org

Wales Arts International: www.wai.org.uk

WOMEX – the world music expo: www.womex.com



Publications

British & International Music Yearbook, which now comes in two volumes and contains details of over 18,000 organisations and performers from every sector of the music industry both in the UK and, increasingly, abroad: UK £33.50 – Europe £38 – Worldwide £46: www.rhinegold.co.uk/yearbooks/bimyb/index.cfm

Overview of the current UK arts scene

Guardian Arts: <http://arts.guardian.co.uk>

BBC Arts: www.bbc.co.uk/arts

Times Online: http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment

About Visiting Arts

What we do

- Provide information and intelligence in order to strengthen intercultural dialogue and understanding
- Create opportunities for artists to explore new connections
- Expand the skills and knowledge of new and existing cultural players for a diverse and sustainable arts environment

How we do this

Among other things we:

- create, produce and distribute: our **free monthly e-newsletter**, help-sheets, targeted briefings... and the latest advice through print, web and word of mouth
- organise and run training programmes, in-country workshops, R&D country-visits and networking events
- establish and foster opportunities for ground-breaking artist exchanges, promote cutting edge exhibitions and contribute to some of the world's biggest and most innovative festivals

From Afghanistan to Zanzibar, we work with the most exciting next generation of artists and cultural players, inviting them to the UK, expanding knowledge and horizons and championing intercultural working. Click here to read about **our current programmes**.

Who we are



Visiting Arts is an independent registered charity, which was set up in 1977.
Registered in England No. 4162404 Charity No. 1085506. Auditors Sayer Vincent.

Visiting Arts works in partnership with British Council, Arts Council England, the Scottish Arts Council, the Arts Council of Wales, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

The Board is chaired by Prof Sir Gordon Conway. Other Board Members are Cathie Boyd, Ajay Chhabra, Graham Long and Romesh Gunsekera.

We have a wide and growing group of partners and associates with whom we work on one-off contracts. These associates represent some of the most experienced and diverse cultural operators in the UK (and beyond).

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