

# western arts alliance

## **NEW COLLEAGUE TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE**

Whether you are an artist, artist manager, presenter or other performing arts professional, you'll find the Western Arts Alliance Conference is a place to discover and explore the creative energy and boundless talent our community has to offer. Like all of us, you have much to share and even more to learn. Your active participation is key to your success on both fronts. The Commons, hospitality events, Professional Development Institute, Showcasing, forums and workshops all provide endless opportunity to educate, inform, entertain and, most importantly, to connect with your colleagues at WAA.

This "starter kit" of tips will help you prepare for and participate at the conference. Knowing about your colleagues, as well as what you need to do, will help provide a stronger environment for success for everyone.

### **THE COMMONS**

The Commons is truly a place for sharing and learning. Explore, ask questions, provide information and discover what you and your colleagues have to offer. There is a lot happening in The Commons, but limited time. Because your initial meeting may be quick, it is a good idea for both presenters and artists/managers to practice the main points they would like to communicate to one another.

If you're an artist/manager, you may want to write a short paragraph that describes the uniqueness of your artist, art form, the repertoire, the general technical requirements, the dates you have available, possible block booking or routing for the year ahead, residency activities, and your artist fees. You may also want to put potential presenters in touch with presenters with whom you've worked with in the past.

If you're a presenter, you should discuss the dates you have available, what your audience is, your venue's specifications, what your artist fee ranges are, and when you plan to make a decision on a particular date. You might want to ask artists/managers who you are considering for references of other presenters who are similar to you in size and audience type who have booked a particular artist in the past.

### **A FEW BASIC RULES**

All WAA members can benefit from a few basic rules of courtesy and respect:

- Be an active listener
- Ask questions
- Be considerate of your colleagues' time constraints
- Respect conversations in progress
- Assume your colleagues want to help you succeed

Say "hello" and... take notes! This is probably one of the most important things you can do at a conference. When you get back to your office, you'll want to know the names and organizations of everyone you talked to. You'll also want to know technical requirements/venue specifications, fee ranges, available dates, etc.

For everyone - it's a great idea to study the list of exhibitors and the maps of the Commons included in the conference program to get a feel for the lay of the land. Exhibitors, introduce yourselves to your neighboring exhibitors. Many of WAA's artists/managers have been attending the conference for 25 years or more. They can serve as a tremendous resource for you. Some self-managed artists use the Commons as a place to look for potential representation. Agents are happy to talk with artists when they aren't otherwise engaged in a conversation with a presenter. Please note: Exhibitors, when you leave the Commons each day, be sure to take business cards with you to give to presenters you meet during other conference activities. You will not be able to access your exhibit during non-accessible hours.

### **TIPS FOR THE COMMONS**

- Dress is business casual. Be sure to bring comfortable shoes as you'll be walking and standing for long periods of time. Dress in layers to accommodate the weather as well as the air conditioned exhibit halls

- and conference meeting rooms.
- Study the list of exhibitors and the hall map.
    - Presenters should make a plan for your time each day in the exhibit hall.
    - Exhibitors might want to greet and network with other exhibitors.
  - Presenters, schedule time to visit the exhibits of artists who may be future considerations.
  - Presenters, schedule a good amount of time to visit the exhibits of artists whose work you are not familiar with.
  - Respect that it is neither easy to say nor hear “no”. The art of doing so gracefully is an important skill for presenters and exhibitors alike and a crucial one to develop. If a presenter is not serious about booking an artist, saying “no” is the only appropriate response. This allows both parties to move on and maximize their valuable time at the conference.
  - Presenters, take materials like press-kits and business cards. If you would like materials mailed to you, make that clear to the artist/manager. Only take recorded materials like CD’s and videos from artists/managers who are under serious consideration. These publicity materials are not meant for personal collections and are expensive for artist/managers to reproduce.

## TIPS FOR EXHIBITORS, ARTISTS, AND MANAGERS

### *\*And what Presenters should know about their colleagues*

**Materials:** Bring materials to distribute including business cards and press kits. Presenters will often ask you to mail your press kits to them after the conference. Although this will add some cost to you, it also presents another opportunity for you to connect with a presenter after the conference. Suggested press kit inclusions are:

- A business card
- Description of the artists
- Photos or flyers that include quality photos
- Technical requirements
- Information on residency/ workshop possibilities
- A listing of previous bookings
- A roster of artists under your management

**Audio/Video Equipment:** Many artist representatives use audio and video within their exhibit so presenters can view or listen to the artists’ work. Per the WAA exhibitor agreement, headphones are required with all audio-visual equipment. You can either bring your own equipment or rent it through WAA’s A/V vendor. You will also need to arrange for an electrical hook-up in your exhibit space. Information outlining audio visual and electrical set-up will be included in the exhibitor kit.

**Exhibit Décor:** Some artists/managers decorate their exhibit that reflects their personal style and flair. Some collect business cards and do a prize drawing after the conference.

**Directory/Website Browsing:** It’s a great idea to browse WAA’s membership directory in advance of the conference to find presenters who might be a good match for you or your artists. The WAA membership directory is also online at the WAA website. Visit the websites of several presenters who you think might be a good fit. Not all venues are right for your artist.

**Online Participant List:** Did you know that WAA publishes a live participant’s list on [www.westarts.org](http://www.westarts.org)? This is a great resource to you to research who is coming to the conference and who you might want to touch base with in advance or be sure to meet at the conference! All registered conference attendees will be sent instructions on how to access the list online.

## TIPS FOR PRESENTERS

### *\*And what Exhibitors, Artists, and Managers should know about their colleagues*

**Prepare Information:** Don't assume an exhibitor will know of your venue or organization. You will find exhibitors can best help you when you share information about your venue, audience tastes, budget, needs for residency activities, housing for artists, and your presenting schedule. One of the best ways to do this is to bring copies of your season brochure to be displayed outside the Commons and to share with artists/managers in the Commons.

**Technical information:** Technical information is critical in helping artists/managers know the strengths and limitations of your space and who often have terrific suggestions for adaptability and creative use. Not all artists can work in your venue(s). Some of the basics are:

- Width, depth and height of stage flooring
- Wing space
- Number of lighting instruments
- Sound and other available technical equipment (clear com systems, etc)
- Type of stage (thrust, proscenium, etc...)
- Dimensions of apron and/or pit (if any)
- Color of curtains
- Dance floor
- Number of legs and borders
- Number of seats in the hall
- Number of dressing rooms/ green rooms/ showers
- Loading dock and parking

**Directory/Website Browsing:** Go through the Membership Directory or artists/managers websites prior to the conference and try to find artists/managers who would be a good fit for your venue and season. It is helpful to prepare a list of artists you would like to know about. Bring the WAA directory with you to the conference or browse the directory on-line at the WAA website now.

**Online Participant List:** Did you know that WAA publishes a live participant's list on [www.westarts.org](http://www.westarts.org)? This is a great resource to you to research who is coming to the conference and who you might want to touch base with in advance or be sure to meet at the conference!

**"Suitcasing," what is it and how do I avoid it?** "Suitcasing" is when an artist/manager does not support the conference by registering, but intends to take advantage of the conference convening by setting up meetings with attendees. Why is this bad? Think of all of the exhibitors who have committed to attending the conference above board by paying registration fees, showcasing, advertising, and attending networking events to meet with you. It is important to support those who have made the effort. The best way to avoid these individuals is to review the conference attendee list and let WAA know if you are receiving requests from un-registered individuals. If you're not sure if someone is a registered attendee, ask us! We'll know.

**Prepare a list, but think broadly:** It is helpful to prepare a list of artists you know you are interested in presenting. This will help focus your time in the Commons. At the same time, prepare a list of artists/managers you want more information about. But be sure to schedule a portion of your time in the Commons to just explore and visit exhibitors you are not familiar with. (If you are new to the field, this may be all of them!) You will be surprised what you might learn.

**Business Cards:** Bring a healthy stack of business cards with you to the conference to give to artists/managers with whom you hope to do work.