



International Touring for Self-Producing Artists: Summary

Led by performance maker [Jessica Wilson](#)¹ this artist learning session explored pathways, strategies and considerations for international touring relevant to independent artists in the TYP space. Many thanks to Jessica and the participating artists for their contributions to this document.

Background

Jessica began by explaining that conventional touring pathways are congested and often inaccessible to independent artists working in more traditional theatre forms. This, and the difficulty of touring large in-theatre works, has led her to investigate and develop other, more nimble, relational ways of presenting her art overseas. She now sees herself and her ideas rather than shows and their infrastructure as the export product.

There are opportunities for immersive, participatory work in other countries. Presenters from both conventional theatrical venues and festivals and non-theatre organisations want this work because it offers them a 'story' about how it was developed (e.g. in collaboration with local children) that helps to connect with their audiences. Independents have the capacity to take control of their own work and act on opportunities in a way that large companies can't.

Jessica's touring pathway has been built through some key elements:

1. Establishing relationships with individuals who are often artists rather than presenters
2. Having flexible artworks that can be configured in multiple ways to suit different contexts

For example: [I See You Like This](#)² is a work with a strong aesthetic and social agenda. Its international success is also due to the fact that it can be configured in different ways, giving venues and the communities they serve an authentic sense of ownership over the production. It involves no freight and no rehearsals, making it more affordable. It does not involve spoken language, so it can be mounted anywhere in the world. The high production values make the product 'hashtagable', which extends the reach of the production.

3. Constantly putting out ideas and completing applications to improve the odds of success.

Why Tour?

The group brainstormed why they want to tour, and Jessica offered her own perspective:

- To supplement income from local presentations.
- To combat isolation.
- To grow the work—new audiences may respond in different ways to Australian audiences, thereby opening up fresh creative possibilities.
- To present bilingual work in places that can enjoy it.
- To present work in countries that have an affinity for its form (e.g. traditional storytelling).

¹ <http://jessicawilson.com.au/about>

² <http://jessicawilson.com.au/iseeyoulikethis/>

- To connect to a place in a deeper way than is possible as a tourist.
- To validate the work for Australian presenters and funders.

Activity

To guide the following pitching activity, Jessica asked the group to consider their work from these perspectives:

- Form
- Theme
- Language/communication
- Scale
- Aesthetic

Pitching: what's important?

- Assume you are interesting and that the potential presenter is interested in you. Know that people are looking for good content and they want to hear from you.
- Start by asking questions about what the presenter is interested in so you don't waste time pitching to the wrong platform.
- Then jump straight in as that's why you're meeting.
- Be conversational.
- Focus on why your work is interesting and different.
- Round off by pre-empting a follow up phone call or email so they expect you to contact them soon.

Pitching: what's compelling?

- A strong, simple idea.
- Passion and belief in the work, its themes and its goal.
- Playing to the strengths of the work and not apologizing for what it is not.
- A challenging or complex concept that engages the mind and emotions.
- Demonstration of knowledge relevant to the project (e.g. early childhood).
- Telling a story or taking the listener on a journey to the heart of the work.
- Vivid descriptions that help the listener to visualize the work.
- Good photos.
- A strong, authentic and convincing opening line (e.g. "Some people think I'm magic").
- A dash of eccentricity.
- Discussion of clear and viable options.
- Something that helps the listener to make a personal and emotional connection to the work, so they have 'buy-in' to the concept.

Jessica's personal pathway to international touring

Partners

Jessica always finds a presenting partner before making the work or applying for money. This validates the work to funders. Partners do not have to be venues e.g. Jessica partnered with Orienteering Australia for [Topographer](#)³.

Premiere

- Invite key presenters. Don't be offended if they don't reply to your invitation. It's usually just that they are too busy.
- Ensure that programmers and presenters see the first season.
- Get reviews and/or testimonials from high profile artists/presenters. Ready-made programs like Survey Monkey can be a useful way to collect these. If you know a high profile writer, ask them to review your work as they will have a good chance of getting it published.

Collateral

- Invest in good photos and document your work.
- Combine these with reviews and testimonials to create high quality information packs for presenters (see information on marketing below).

Second opportunity/presentation

This can be national or international and externally or self-produced—it doesn't matter—just make sure people come!

Showcase or strategic season

- [IPAY](#)⁴: It costs US\$250 to apply to present at this US-based showcase. The Australia Council has funds reserved to support artists attending. It can lead to touring throughout the US but is not for everyone because of the relatively conservative nature of the US market.
- [APAM](#)⁵: The format of APAM is for artists to speak for 10 minutes about their work. In 2021 there is a special APAM focusing on work with and for young people planned.
- [PAMS](#)⁶: This Korean showcase services the Asian market and has a dedicated section for work with/for young people.
- [ASSITEJ](#)⁷: Each country has opportunities and there is one annual international festival.
- Fringe festivals: These often act as a market, with some festivals paying for presenters to attend.

International residency/workshop/seminar/symposium

Use these to meet artists, be immersed in a place and learn about local opportunities.

³ <http://jessicawilson.com.au/topographer-3>

⁴ <https://ipayweb.org>

⁵ <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/international/australian-performing-arts-market-apam/>

⁶ <https://en.pams.or.kr/#>

⁷ <https://www.assitej-international.org>

Current Trends

United States

- Has a market for large scale, in-theatre work with a big visual impact
- Values work that has a 'soft message'
- Work must be in English
- Museums are a good source of bookings

Europe

- Favours ambitious contemporary theatre with formal, well articulated innovation
- Work for children aged 10+ can be in English

Asia

- Values technical virtuosity
- Values delight-filled work with content that is not too challenging

Build networks

- Constantly build your network to create further opportunities.
- Cast the net wide, but keep a record of who you have contacted and their responses.
- Ask people who are in a position to do so to give you a personal introduction to key presenters.
- If it helps, name drop! i.e. "Such and such suggested I call you..."
- Reciprocate i.e. help other artists by offering up your contacts and making introductions.

Further Help

- Agents can be useful for touring the US and Asia but they can take a big commission so may not be worth it.
- [Theatre Network Australia](https://www.tna.org.au)⁸ and [Auspicious Arts Projects](https://www.auspicious.com.au)⁹ offer good resources and support for independent artists. Join their mailing lists for useful updates and announcements.
- [The Australia Council](https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/international/international/)¹⁰ has an officer dedicated to helping artists seek markets in Asia and Europe.
- Research other artists' touring lists to understand what markets are currently open and what work they are programming.
- Australian presenters all talk to each other and are generally very helpful. Ask one who you are working with to recommend you to another, so you can make their season viable by programming two consecutive seasons.
- Get the right email for the right person so your message is received and answered.
- Subscribe to the [ArtPlay SIGNAL artist e-news](https://confirmsubscription.com/h/030DD70EE17BADB8)¹¹.

⁸ <https://www.tna.org.au>

⁹ <https://www.auspicious.com.au>

¹⁰ <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/international/international/>

¹¹ <https://confirmsubscription.com/h/030DD70EE17BADB8>

Carbon

One return flight to London from Melbourne releases 5.6 tonnes of carbon per passenger (not including freight). This is obviously not sustainable, so what should artists considering international touring do? The group offered these thoughts and suggestions:

- Consider if you really need to go. What will the trip give you that you can't get through other means?
- Pitch via video link.
- Maximize the time spent overseas with longer tours.
- Try to reduce the scale of your work. Does it need a team of 3 or 5? Can you go alone?
- Tour without freight or casts i.e. make art that can be remounted locally without the need to send sets and casts from Australia.
- Offset the carbon emitted by the travel (see links below). Note that 257.6 trees need to be planted to offset a return flight to London from Melbourne. Include carbon offset costs in grant applications and in payment negotiations.

Useful carbon-related links

[The Gold Standard](#)¹²

[Root and Shoots](#)¹³

[Future Energy Artists](#)¹⁴

[15 Trees](#)¹⁵

[Tree Sisters](#)¹⁶

Pricing

- A fair amount in 2019 is \$1,900 per day for three artists, or \$12,000/week.
- Include 40% to your production fee as your company fee in your budget, to cover administrative costs.
- Consider charging a weekly fee for bookings of 3-5 days.

Marketing

Spend time on high quality marketing materials. Some useful great template sites are:

[Canva](#)¹⁷ and [PandaDoc](#)¹⁸ for marketing and proposal templates.

[Mailchimp](#)¹⁹ for marketing management. Services like this allow you to see who has opened your emails and how frequently.

¹² <https://www.goldstandard.org>

¹³ <https://www.rootsandshoots.org>

¹⁴ <https://www.feat.ltd>

¹⁵ <https://15trees.com.au>

¹⁶ <https://treesisters.org>

¹⁷ <https://www.canva.com>

¹⁸ <https://www.pandadoc.com>

¹⁹ <https://mailchimp.com>