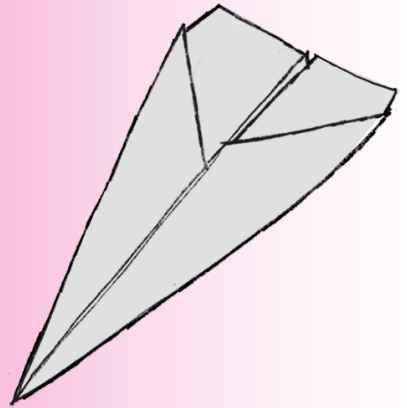


On Tour!

Tools, Tips and
Strategies for
Distribution Work



English

Performing Arts
Programm
Berlin

On Tour!

Tools, Tips and Strategies for Distribution Work

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Introduction

Dear readers,

With this publication, we shine a light on a topic that is often underestimated in the performing arts: distribution work. But what exactly does that mean? What does it take—and when is the best time to start?

Conceptualizing and realizing an artistic project is the first step; the next step is making it available to a broad audience. In the independent performing arts, distribution work is therefore a critical part of the creative process, helping to spread the word about the project. It includes all of the steps necessary for a production to be visible on local and international stages and should be integrated early on into production planning.

Often, however, the personal capacities and financial means for the development and realization of a distribution strategy are lacking. Many independent artists end up taking on multiple functions simultaneously (author, producer, communicator, attorney), and funding often only covers production costs up until the premiere. In light of the increasing challenges facing culture at the moment, distribution work is more important than ever: cuts to cultural budgets threaten the livelihoods of artists themselves, making each performance date an important source of income in its own right. At the same time, some of the networks and initiatives that provide support to artists for distribution are also suffering from cuts (including produktionsbande and Kreativ-Transfer, whose continued existence beyond 2026 is uncertain). Alongside the practical components, distribution work also has a political dimension: in times of increasing right-wing positions, it is critical that diversity and the free expression of opinion on stage be preserved.

At the beginning of distribution, a fundamental strategic decision must be made: will you take on this demanding task yourself, or will you look for professional support? While hiring a distribution office may seem like the ideal solution at first, this option is extremely limited in Berlin: the majority of production management offices support artists in the areas of project management, financing and planning, but only rarely take on distribution work. The few offices that do offer this service generally do not function as classical service providers, but instead select projects that align with their own artistic profile.

The path most frequently taken, then, continues to be that artists handle distribution themselves. The successful distribution of a project requires not only artistic quality, but also a well-thought-out strategy and basic resources such as time, motivation, patience, communication skills, good knowledge of the industry and a comprehensive network. A healthy dose of luck never hurts, either.

In this process, platforms such as the Berlin Performing Arts Program play a critical role by offering artists opportunities to exchange experiences with experts and members of the independent performing arts community, share resources and open up distribution options that are international and reach other communities. With its diverse offerings, the Berlin Performing Arts Program contributes to pooling professional knowledge and creating synergies. One focus has been placed on (inter)national networking and distribution work: the Berlin Performing Arts Program supports artists working within Berlin's independent performing arts community in making their work visible nationwide and internationally, establishing new contacts, building long-term collaborations and further developing their artistic practice—from delegation trips and trade fair visits to programs for visiting industry professionals.

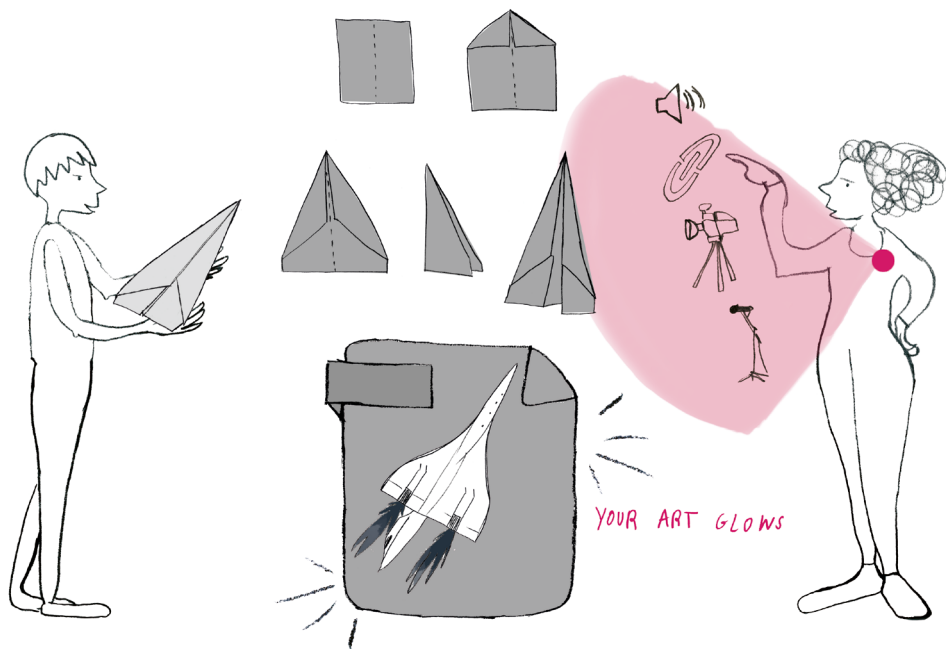
This publication is intended to serve as an initial orientation and guide for getting started in distribution work. Different authors with many years of professional experience have put together practical information to help you navigate the often unclear ecosystem and to consider your own distribution strategy. The illustrations by Cristina Sahuquillo supplement the informative content and, like the included poster, are intended to provide inspiration for the creative phase of an artistic project and to help you find your own path toward developing a distribution strategy. After all, every project is unique, and the strategies for distribution are manifold.

We hope this publication will be a helpful companion on your journey to successful distribution. We wish you the best!

Warm regards,
Catherine Launay and Antonia Deckert

How Do I Present My Production?

From Creating Your Profile All the Way to the Cover Letter



Distribution means communicating with the goal of introducing an artistic work to people who will then present it. In the following, this process will be explained in a very clear manner. To get things started: the prerequisite for facilitating communication about one of your productions is that it has already been produced. Ideas, plans and works that are not currently in a rehearsal process can, of course, be communicated to festivals or venues for guest performances, but in this case we are talking about a co-production.

Be empathetic

Communication is what the recipient receives. This means that it is of the utmost importance to be empathetic to those people that you would like to interest in your artistic work. The goal is that they are eager to take a look at the materials that will be described more precisely in the following. Festivals and performance venues tend to receive a great deal of material. If you give them cryptic texts, blurry images and audio that is barely intelligible, these people will not take the time to consider your work.

Document the work thoroughly

Let's get back to the process. You have created a piece and brought it into the world. Now, in contrast to a co-production, you have the advantage of being able to communicate about a work that already exists and that, in the best case, has good documentation material: photos, videos and maybe even positive reviews. Now hold on just for a second: distribution starts precisely with documenting a work effectively; not only with good-looking, posed press images, but also with material that shows what the production looked like in the performance venue. In terms of videos, a promotional trailer from the rehearsal process is also not enough; a trailer consisting of real material from the performance **and** a complete recording are much better and these should be well-edited, possibly also including subtitles. All this material serves two purposes: it documents the essence of the performance and, just as importantly, it demonstrates the professionalism of the artist. It is not enough to have had a good show on stage if it is documented in a less good video with a shaky camera and crackly audio. After all, no human being in the world enjoys watching unprofessional videos. With this in mind, you should be absolutely certain to plan for professional documentation before the premiere so that you are able to put together an outstanding distribution package later.

Keep press and media in mind

Was there any "press" at the performances? Unfortunately, media resonance remains the gold standard for many event organizers. As the (antiquated) saying goes, only those productions that have been recognized by the critics have really taken place. There are, however, in many media now many fewer reviews and independent performing artists compete for attention with much larger theaters, Netflix and gaming, while the culture sections of newspapers are getting smaller and smaller. With this in mind, try to integrate professional press work into the process as early as possible so that your press person can convince critics to attend your event. In some countries, things are really nearly impossible without the seal of approval of a good press quote. These quotes are also essential for promoting

the event. Positive press is always a reassurance for the event organizer that the project is deemed good not only by their own curatorial team.

If there is a review that is only positive in part, you can simply only quote the part that sounds positive. In the event of translations, into English, for example, it may also sound more positive than the original. A helpful trick to make up for a lack of press is to invite bloggers or experts and ask them for quotable statements, or to keep a guest book with excerpts you can add to your materials.

No matter how many reviews or statements from third parties you have collected, the best thing is to collect all of them, together with the photos and the video links in one PDF. Anything else is confusing and can easily be lost. This PDF with the project portfolio should contain everything that could interest someone about a project:

- > What is the idea of the play (the performance, whatever)?
 - > Who is doing what? Which artists and, if applicable, which institutions (performance venues, foundations, universities, et cetera) are involved and how?
 - > What is the content, the topic?
 - > What discourse does all of this tie into?
 - > Is there some kind of sorting into genres, methods, formats?
 - > Where has it been presented and what were the reactions?
- The reviews and other voices are presented **here**.
- > There is also, of course, an overview with the credits with all of the funders and supporters. **After all:** everything that makes a project trustworthy is of importance.

Only a good project can be communicated well. But, only professionally documented and structured projects will be looked at in the first place. And only a project that coherently explains what it is, how it was received and who was involved creates trust.

It is not enough, unfortunately, to have a great show and a perfect portfolio. The portfolio also has to have a digital presence: a professional website about the company or the artistic direction of the project is just as necessary. The project must be presented there (even if it is in a reduced form). And even if this may seem difficult politically, the project should also exist in the form of an Instagram feed, at least if a younger audience is desired (the older target group is still using Facebook). This digital reflection not only serves to provide information, it also stands as a verification of an orientation toward an audience.

The recipients of your distribution attempts would like to, of course, invite professionals. This is why reference projects from the past are also placed on the website and these are ideally impressive. It is very rare that an artist's first work receives an invitation. Event organizers really like to

Compile the portfolio as a PDF

Ensure an online presence

have a narrative of an artistic development, a “backstory”. This, of course, is not found in the portfolio of the work that you make, but instead on the website, which also presents all of your previous work—and proves that you are professional artists who have survived for longer than one year.

The website is not only for curators, of course, but instead for everyone. With this in mind, projects should be presented there without spoilers as well as without academic backgrounds. The portfolio, however, is intended to address experts. This means that the content can be somewhat more academic, if it is appropriate for the piece, or make professional references that are of less importance for the “general audience” that uses the website.

In the portfolio, list the links of the videos (the internet killed the DVD); you are also welcome to include links to photos. Ideally, do not share all of the video links on the website as receiving access to the complete documentation should be something exclusive. As a result, the links can also be protected by passwords (if the password is provided in the portfolio).

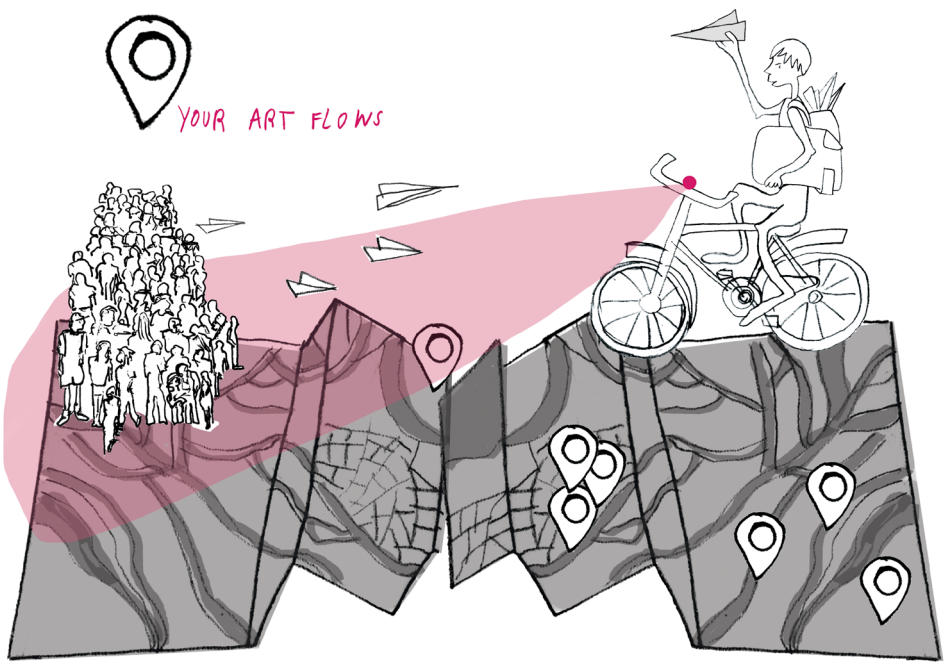
In general: Your portfolio does not have to exist on paper. Digital also has the benefit that you can add links to the websites of project partners as well as to the videos.

Finally, let's talk about the most important element: the cover letter. As is also the case when applying for a job, the sender has to prove that they are the very best choice for the recipient. On the one hand, this includes the empathy already mentioned at the beginning as well as an understanding of the programming direction of a venue or festival. You should make absolutely certain to tie your work into this. It has to be a good fit. It has to be the right piece for the right context. And you have to be the one who understands this well and who, most of all, finds this direction good. It must be clear in your cover letter why all of this fits together so well. Only then will your reader want to take a look at your portfolio, videos, et cetera and to get to know you better. After all, this should be the result of a cover letter: an invitation to a performance and/or to a personal meeting. It is during this that the final communication takes place and, ideally, the decision to present your work is made.

Max Schumacher works as a dramaturg, curator, moderator, producer and instructor at the intersection of theater and media art. posttheater.com ↗

How Do I Find the Right Performance Venue?

Arousing Interest and
Building Networks



Successful distribution begins with building a solid network and making contact with the right partners. The core of this is finding the most suitable performance venues for your artistic project, whether they are theaters, festivals or other cultural spaces. Since each project has its special features and cannot be performed everywhere, it's essential to conduct precise research into the profiles and focus areas of potential venues. Even if conducting targeted searches seems laborious at first, it will prove to be a valuable and time-saving decision in the long term.

If you aren't handling distribution yourself, it's important that the person who does receives a comprehensive briefing about your project before they begin. After all, the person responsible for distribution isn't merely selling a performance; they are the spokesperson of your project. With this in mind, they should be fully aware of the production's aesthetics, the values of the artist or ensemble, the project's development, and the optimal technical conditions to connect with venue programmers and articulate the unique characteristics of your project.

Here are some aspects you can use to orient yourself during your search for performance venues:

- > **Think about which venues you would most like to present your project.** Take time to analyze whether these spaces are suitable in terms of aesthetics, genre, themes and technical requirements. If possible, visit these locations beforehand to get a concrete impression and to get a sense of the audience.
- > **List the professionals who have already seen your work.** These contacts can play a key role in your professional network. Each one is a potential amplifier and may know of other venues that would be suitable for your production. Be open to discussions and to exchanging ideas.
- > **Research venues where other artists or groups you feel connected to, or that work in a similar direction, have performed.** This can give you leads on programmers and venues that might be interested in your work.
- > **Define a geographical area for your search; this can be local, international or both.** This limitation allows you to work more specifically and to apply for certain types of local funding. Funding is often tied to the specific German state where the performance takes place. If you're planning a tour, it's advantageous to cluster the venues logically to benefit from local networks and save on travel expenses.
- > **Please note:** when searching for international performance venues, it's critical to assess your own personal and financial resources carefully. Entering the international arena can be a significant challenge and a costly undertaking. This is why a thorough analysis of the project beforehand is essential to assess its potential accurately. In some cases, an international performance and the accompanying recognition can help make your project more visible in your home country.

Set Up Your Own Database

It's often helpful to create and maintain your own database. This doesn't necessarily require a complex system; it can be a simple Excel spreadsheet. The important thing is to keep all your contacts in one document so it's easy to search and update. Given the constant personnel fluctuations in the industry, it's critical to ensure your database is always current. Develop a system to categorize contacts, such as: venues you have performed at, people you have spoken with and potential new venues.

Maintain and Expand the Network

Ultimately, it's crucial to maintain and expand your network. Stay current by attending your colleagues' performances and visiting venues and festivals. These experiences are essential for understanding what is currently being staged. Use symposia, trade fairs and festivals to expand your network

and meet programmers directly. Remember: every interaction is an opportunity to learn and collaborate—exchanging ideas with other artists and professionals can enrich your own work.

All things considered, distribution in the performing arts is a dynamic process that requires strategy, passion and perseverance. If you invest time in searching for and building authentic relationships, you increase your chances of success and contribute to the vitality of the independent performing arts community.

Making Contact and Following Up

1. Making Contact

The first Email: When contacting a programmer or venue for the first time, it's important to write an email that sparks interest while also reflecting your artistic profile.

—> **Precision and succinctness:** Your message should be clear and direct. Avoid lengthy introductions and get straight to the point. Introduce yourself briefly and explain why you are writing.

—> **Personalized content:** Show you've done your research. Explain why you are contacting this specific venue. Mention specific programming elements that relate to your artistic project.

—> **Project description:** Provide a short description of your project. What are its themes and who is the target audience? This helps programmers quickly understand the core of your work. List any specific venue requirements here.

—> **Additional formats:** If your project includes ancillary formats (workshops, discussions, interactive performances, etc.), mention these additional offerings. This can enrich your proposal and demonstrate the diversity of your artistic approach.

—> **Attachments:** Don't forget to attach a PDF portfolio that presents your project in a visually compelling way. Ensure the file is named properly and can be opened with standard software.

2. Making Appointments

If you schedule an appointment to present your project in greater detail, be sure to prepare. Before the meeting, create a brief summary of your project and the key points you want to address. This will help you stay focused and to respect your counterpart's limited time.

3. Informal Meetings

Trade fairs, festivals and performances are excellent opportunities to connect with programmers and other artists. How can you best prepare for these encounters?

Establish a
foundation

Speaking about
your project in
person

Making contacts
at events

—→ **Preparation:** Before an event, research who you want to meet and be clear about your goals. Prepare a brief elevator pitch about your project so you can share it easily.

—→ **The encounter:** Be friendly, sensitive, and open during these informal meetings. Be ready to start a conversation, but also respect the other person's time.

—→ **Business cards:** Have business cards (printed or digital) ready so your conversation partners can contact you easily afterward.

4. Invitations to Premieres and Performances

Inviting programmers and professionals specifically to your premieres or performances can strengthen your network and increase your project's visibility.

—→ **Guest selection:** Research relevant local programmers for where your performance is happening and invite them.

—→ **Personal invitation:** A personal invitation is much more preferable to a mass mailing. Take a moment to explain specifically why you are inviting that person and what their attendance would mean for you and your project.

5. Following Up

After making written contact or meeting with organizers, it's critical to develop a follow-up strategy.

—→ **Reminders:** If you don't receive a response within a reasonable time (usually two to three weeks), send a friendly reminder. This shows your interest and commitment.

—→ **Project update emails:** Send an update if your project has evolved or you have interesting news to share. This can strengthen your relationship with organizers and maintain their interest in your work.

—→ **Continuity:** After a meeting (formal or informal), it's a good practice to add the new contact to your database and follow up with an email containing the information you discussed. Even if they didn't explicitly ask for additional materials, it can help them remember your project and stay in touch.

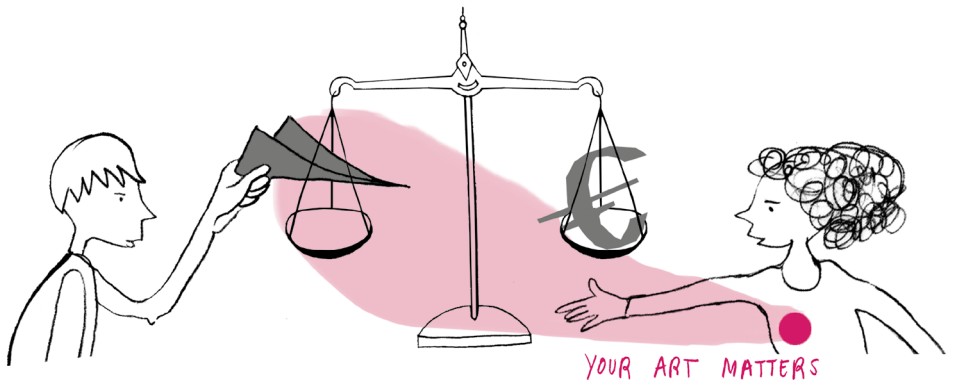
Send invitations early

Plan your follow-up

Catherine Launay works as a production manager and distributor for theater, dance and sound art in Berlin and France and has also worked for the Berlin Performing Arts Program since 2022. catherinel aunay.com ↗

What Are You Worth?

Pricing and Negotiating Fees in the Cultural Sector



Anyone who works artistically is familiar with this dilemma: how do you find a price that honestly reflects your work and how do you speak about it convincingly? The question of the fee is much more than a simple question of calculations. It touches upon central topics such as self-worth, positioning, entrepreneurial thinking and, last but not least, also the question: how do you want to be able to live with your art?

Price = Position + Calculation

A price has an external effect and is created internally. Before you think about numbers, it is worth taking a moment to understand price as an expression of your position. After all: the first step toward a fair payment is identifying and recognizing your own value.

A price is not a neutral number. It is a message concerning:

- > The quality of your work
- > Your professional standards
- > Your self-esteem

This is why it is so important that you not only feel justified in your price, but that you can also clearly explain it.

That is: we need to move away from a pure gut feeling toward well-founded principles. After all, whoever truly understands their price can also communicate it self-confidently. And, whoever does this gains flexibility, both artistically and financially

Psychological Hurdles—What Holds You Back

Many people have a hard time clearly defining their price and advocating for it. Often, it is not external circumstances that prevent you from doing so, but instead internal blockades. It is not “the market”, but instead deep-seated convictions or beliefs that could have inhibiting effects, such as:

- > “I really can’t ask for that much...”
- > “I’m doing this for the love of the game, not for the money.”
- > “Other people are accepting less.”

Behind these thoughts often lie constraints, such as:

- > The fear of rejection
- > A lack of self-esteem
- > The desire to be liked

Here is an exercise: Write down your spontaneous convictions concerning the topics of money and price. For each sentence, ask yourself: Is this thought helping me or is it holding me back?

Awareness is the first step toward clarity. The second is to specifically formulate new, empowering thoughts that strengthen you in your entrepreneurial actions.

Supportive Convictions—Strengthening Your Inner Foundations

Insecurities while negotiating often not only come from a lack of knowledge, but instead also from deeply seated convictions. Your ways of thinking affect our actions. Especially with the topic of money, price or visibility, what we think (consciously or unconsciously) about ourselves often has an effect. Supportive mantras can help you to strengthen your internal confidence and help you to clearly represent your worth. For example:

—> “I am allowed to earn money with my art, because it has an effect.”

—> “A fair price is a sign of appreciation, for my counterpart as well as for myself.”

—> “I work as a professional and I am thus allowed to think and negotiate professionally.”

Tip: Write down three to five sentences that empower you and read them aloud on a regular basis. What may sound simple has a profound effect: your mindset is an active part of your business model.

Your Business Model—Your Foundation

Once you have recognized and reflected upon your inner obstacles, it is time for the next step: clarity about what you are offering. A coherent price requires a solid foundation, which is your business model.

Ask yourself the following questions:

—> **What exactly am I offering? (Offer)** What artistic or creative products, formats or services are you making available?

—> **For whom? (Target Group)** Who are your customers, clients or your audience and what need are you fulfilling for them?

—> **Under which conditions? (Income & Pricing)** How do you earn money from this? What prices, fees or financing models are you using?

—> **Over which channels? (Communication & Distribution)** How do you reach your target group? Which platforms, networks or sales channels are you using for visibility and sales?

Exercise: Formulate your business model in a single sentence. Example: “I develop theater formats for rural regions that combine education and entertainment and which are crowd-pleasers for the event organizers.” Anyone who can clearly name their business model is also able to represent their price in a more confident manner.

Four Ways of Looking At Your Price

Now let's get specific: how is a price found that is both fair as well as acceptable? Four perspectives will help you to develop a consistent and understandable price structure:

1. Cost Orientation—What Do You Need To Be Able To Cover Your Costs While Working?

What does your price at least have to cover in order to make your artistic work economically viable?

- > Working times (including preparation and post-processing, administration)
- > Technical elements, travel, materials
- > Taxes, reserves, insurance

Tip: Calculate honestly—Without careful calculation, invisible self-exploitation is inevitable.

2. Market Orientation—What Prices Are the Others Charging?

What is standard in your field? What do fees look like in comparable formats?

- > Fee in similar formats or projects
- > Recommendations from lobbying organizations (e.g. min. fee limits)
- > Figures based on experience from your network

Tip: Speak with your colleagues. Exchange is an excellent defense against illusions, regardless of whether the perceived earnings are too high or too low.

3. Value Orientation—What Benefits Are You Providing?

What is the non-material, emotional or societal added value of your work?

- > Emotional, societal or aesthetic effect
- > A boost in image and attractivity for event organizers or funders
- > The uniqueness of your perspective or method

Tip: Formulate three sentences about why your work is effective—for *whom* and *how*. This will strengthen your argumentation in conversations.

4. Positioning Orientation—How Are You Perceived?

How do you appear to external parties and what does that communicate about the quality of your work?

- > Professional impression (website, language, materials)
- > References, media presence, testimonials
- > Artistic charisma and recognizability

Possible
comparable prices

Typical value as-
pects

Aspects of your
public image

Tip: Look at yourself from the outside: What does somebody see who doesn't know you and what presumably stays with them?

These four perspectives will help you not only to calculate your price, but also to advocate for it—internally as well as externally.

Desired Price, Minimum Limit, Absolute Limit— Your Price Compass

A well-founded calculation is important, but your price is also a personal decision. In order to be able to act clearly and confidently, it is helpful for you to be aware of three price levels for every offer:

- > The desired price: This covers all of the costs, acknowledges your expertise and creates space for reserves, growth and further development.
- > Minimum limit: This ensures that all costs are covered—without, however, providing a buffer for investments, risks or unexpected expenses.
- > Absolute limit: This starts where things become economically or emotionally painful. Working at this price often leads to self-exploitation.

Tip: Think about these three levels before every conversation or offer. They will give you inner clarity and protect you from spontaneously agreeing to things because you are uncertain or are trying to be nice.

The Negotiation Table— The Stage For Your Price Communication

A well-calculated price is the foundation. It does not become effective, however, until you activate it through your communication. After all: even the fairest price in the world is of little use to you if you cannot advocate for it clearly and self-confidently. Negotiating does not mean fighting, but instead entering into a relationship with each other. With clarity, respect and inner stability.

Two anchors that will provide you with confidence in your negotiations are:

1. Preparation

Set down all of your most important information in writing

- > The content of your offer
- > Price structure (desired price, minimum limit, absolute limit)
- > Conditions, flexibilities, possible alternatives

2. Position

- > You are allowed to ask: “What is your budget?”
- > You are allowed to say: “That’s my price.”
- > And you are also allowed to say “no” to conditions that are not good for you.

Here is an exercise: your “elevator pitch”

The goal: convincingly say who you are, what you do and why this matters in 60 seconds. Concisely. Clearly. Self-confidently.

Here is how
to do it:

1. Write Three Short Sentences

- > What are you offering? e.g. “I develop performative formats for urban populations.”
- > For whom and with what benefits? “My productions speak to new target groups and put current topics on stage.”
- > What does it cost—or what is the value? “The fee is ... for a professional production with a great deal of audience impact.”

2. Rehearse Your Pitch Out Loud—With a Stopwatch

- > Remain relaxed, friendly and focused.
- > Pay attention to your tempo, clarity and the way you come across.

3. Practice Over and Over—Until It Feels Good

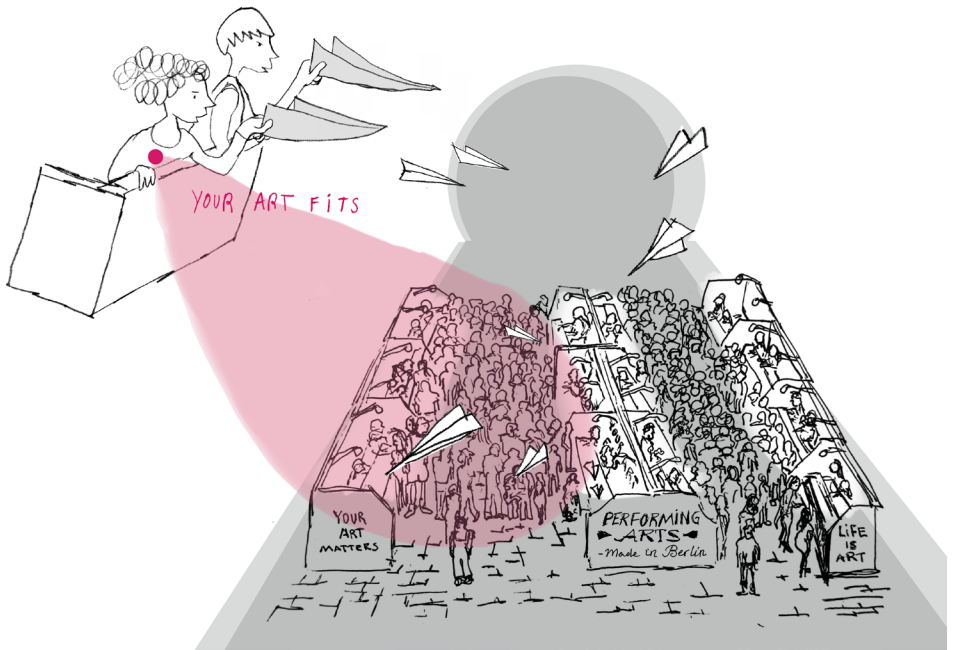
- > Try out your pitch in the mirror or with colleagues.
- > Ask for feedback: “What stays with you?”

Bear in mind: Good communication is not a show, but instead a position: you know what you are worth. And you can say it loud and proud.

In Conclusion—Pricing Is Self-Empowerment

Pricing is not only calculating, it is an expression of your position. Anyone who is aware of their own worth and can communicate it clearly gains confidence, visibility and flexibility—for artistic freedom and financial stability. Make your pricing a conscious step and, with it, shape your own path into creative independence.

Gero John is a musician and, together with Sebastian Kautz, the co-founder of the theater label Bühne Cipolla. He was a member of the board of LAFDK Bremen from 2023 to 2025. buehneqipolla.de ↗



Trade Fairs

Their Significance, Experiences and Tips

Trade fairs are a central instrument for the independent performing arts in Germany. They allow networking, increase visibility and offer a platform for presenting new projects, developing markets and further developing yourself artistically. At the same time, they make an essential contribution to the professionalization of independent artists. Through the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practice examples, they provide valuable impulses for the independent performing arts community. Trade fairs often also include workshops, seminars or rounds of discussion that can contribute to further training and reflection about the current developments and challenges in the field of the independent performing arts.

They are meeting places for artists, event organizers, producers and agents. Trade fairs allow direct exchanges, the building of contacts, the discovery of new cooperation partners and even the negotiation of potential engagements. Anyone who would like to present themselves can book a stand for themselves or share a stand together with other groups or organizations. In addition, some trade fairs offer the opportunity to present artistic work either in short pitching sessions or showings to an audience of industry professionals.

The Berlin Performing Arts Program regularly travels to national and international trade fairs and offers the opportunity, via open calls, to apply to present your work at a shared trade fair stand with us or to present your work to an audience of industry professionals in pitching sessions. In 2024, we also founded our own trade fair format: the Berlin Performing Arts Market. It gives Berlin-based artists the opportunity to present themselves and their work to an (inter)national audience of industry professionals. You will find a list of important trade fairs at the end of this chapter.

Prepare Yourself Well: You need to be very clear in your mind about what you want to offer in the specific context, including the different variations and prices! Fittingly for this, you also need to have your calendar and your availability for the current and upcoming season in mind, so that you don't make any mistakes during a meeting. This way, you make a reliable and well-organized impression! Event organizers don't have any time for chaos; they need reliability.

Ursula Maria Berzborn

Artistic Director of Grotest Maru

Conduct Research on the Participants and Plan Networking: Study the list of participants thoroughly and look for people that a) you know, that can accompany you through the jungle of the trade fair and who can introduce you to other curators. A buddy system like this is always a good way to get to know someone and creates direct trust. And b) look for people whose festivals or performance venues interest you and in whose schedule of programming you can specifically imagine the artists that you represent. To do so, it is important to conduct thorough research into the people—what kind of background do they have, how long have they already been with the festival/performance venue, who have they curated in recent years? Then make a list of priorities: Which 10 people do you absolutely want to meet? Write to these people and request short meetings with specific and realistic times and dates. Write individual emails; do not send any mass mails with recipients in bcc. It is sufficient to write to people 10 to 14 days before the trade fair. In addition, think about three keywords that describe your practice. Use these to structure your pitch in order to provide a brief introduction to yourself. Don't learn any catchphrases by heart. And, don't forget, small talk is very important!

Tammo Walter

Producer, tour manager and distribution agent for contemporary dance, performance and festivals

Bring the Team: If an artistic production is going to be offered at a trade fair, it is helpful both for the artists and for the potential representatives of the performance venues that are being approached if you visit the trade fair as a team with one person responsible for technical matters and another for the communication.

Daniela Titze

Program Director of UfaFabrik Berlin

Offer Other Smaller Productions: The productions should not be too elaborate technically and should be adaptable to smaller stages. Anyone who is looking to present their production is best advised to simply visit the KinderKulturBörse first and then to make a decision.

Claudius Beck

Director of KinderKulturBörse
(the Childrens' Culture Exchange)

Note the Context of the Trade Fair: Understand the context of the trade fair and view your own artistic work in this context. What event organizers are coming to this specific trade fair? What is being looked for and how can I best present myself? It is a good idea to present your own artistic work differently at different trade fairs and to show different photos and different videos.

Ursula Maria Berzborn
Artistic Director of Grotest Maru

Speak Personally: Especially at trade fairs, personal contact quickly gives an idea of the range and content-based orientation of performance venues, artists and agents so that interests and similarities can be exchanged more sustainably in personal conversation and binding agreements can be made.

Daniela Titze
Program Director of UfaFabrik Berlin

Get an Overview: Alongside the exchange with event organizers, that is, potential buyers of your work, it is also important to meet other artists, to enter into collegial exchange, to understand the concerns of others and to share your own, to exchange certain professional know-how and to remain in solidary contact. By independently visiting the stands of other colleagues, you can obtain an overview of what is currently being produced and what artistic works are current and in demand. In addition, you may find out in confidential conversations what price other artists are asking for their work and can then situate yourselves better.

Ursula Maria Berzborn
Artistic Director of Grotest Maru

Present Yourself Live: The best way for artists to convince the largest possible audience of professionals is through a live presentation. It is not so much about showing only the strongest parts of your work, but instead speaking reliably with the industry professionals and to present excerpts from your production. Following the live presentation, a post-performance discussion with an engaging moderation should be offered.

Daniela Titze
Program Director of UfaFabrik Berlin

Present Good Video Material: At the IKF, juries select artists who can then present themselves on stage. This is why videos are the most important materials in the application. Videos of a live performance are the most expressive for the jury.

Anna-Lena Weckesser
Management of the Internationalen Kulturbörse Freiburg (IKF, the Freiburg International Culture Exchange)

Trade Fairs in Germany

The Berlin Performing Arts Program is regularly represented at the following trade fairs in Germany. In addition, there are a number of additional interesting trade fairs such as, for example Performance – Kulturbörse für Straßenkunst (Performance – Culture Exchange for Street Art) in Paderborn.

[Internationale Kulturbörse Freiburg \(the Freiburg International Culture Exchange\)](#)

[#Performing Arts](#)

[#Music](#)

[#Street Theater](#)

International

Every year in Freiburg in January
kulturboerse-freiburg.de/en ↗

The Internationale Kulturbörse Freiburg (IKF, or the Freiburg International Culture Exchange) is the largest trade fair in the German-speaking world for stage productions, music and events. Every January, international artists and ensembles present excerpts from their programming in the fields of the performing arts, music and street theater for an audience of industry professionals. Visiting industry professionals such as event organizers, agents and producers exchange, make contacts and discover new trends. A diverse schedule of ancillary programming rounds out the three days of events.

[internationale tanzmesse nrw](#)

[#Dance](#)

International

Every two years in Düsseldorf
tanzmesse.com/en ↗

The internationale tanzmesse nrw is put on by the nrw landesbuero tanz (the North-Rhine Westphalia State Office for Dance) and is the largest professional meeting for contemporary dance. This dance trade fair is an important meeting place for international dancers and dance makers as a forum for exchange, the transfer of knowledge and networking. The up to 1,500 international presenters and visitors come to Düsseldorf every two years at the end of August and present a wide spectrum of aesthetic styles as well as artistic practices. The internationale tanzmesse nrw is composed of three areas: Agora, Talk & Connection and the performance program.

INTHEGA-Kongress

#Crossover

#Cabaret

#Children's and Youth Theater

#Variety

#Concerts

#Theater and Music Theater

#Shows and Dance

German-speaking world

Every year in Bielefeld

intheqa.de ↗

INTHEGA stands for the Interessengemeinschaft der Städte mit Theatergastspielen e.V. (the Interest Group of Cities with Theater Guest Performances) and consists of a two-day theater market and a one-day professional conference. The theater market is the leading trade fair of the guest performance industry. Some 180 providers present their guest performance options for the respective following season. The awarding of the INTHEGA Prizes takes place during an evening event. The professional conference looks at current topics from the field of the guest performance industry through presentations, discussions and workshops and provides time and space for an intensive professional dialogue and for the collegial exchange with people working in the field of culture.

KinderKulturBörse

#All genres for Children and Young People

German-speaking world

Every year alternating between

Munich (Pasinger Fabrik) or

Berlin (FEZ)

kinderkulturboerse.net ↗

The format of the “culture exchange” was developed by the Schweizer Kleintheatervereinigung (SKT, the Association of Small Swiss Theaters) and concentrates on info stands and showings. It is intended for artists working in the field of children’s culture in the areas of theater, object theater, puppet theater, clown, magic, children’s music, dance and more. The visitors primarily include industry professionals who organize events for children—such as those working within communal cultural work, from festivals, touring stages, libraries and from the field of youth work.

The Berlin Performing Arts Market

#Multidisciplinary

German-speaking world

Every year in Berlin

pap-berlin.de/en/performing-arts-market-berlin ↗

The Berlin Performing Arts Market is the first trade fair for the performing arts in Berlin and increases the international and national visibility of the local independent performing arts community. Berlin-based artists and theater groups have the opportunity to present their work to (inter)national curators, event organizers and festival programmers in pitching sessions, enter into conversation with them and perhaps also agree to a cooperation or two.

International Trade Fairs

The Performing Arts Program does not only travel within Germany; it also travels across the globe to important trade fairs. A list of additional international trade fairs can be found in our digital reference guide Freie Szene Kompass at pap-berlin.de/freie-szene-kompass ↗.

CINARS Biennale

#Multidisciplinary

Every two years in Montreal,
Canada

cinars.org/cinars ↗

Edinburgh Festival Fringe

#Multidisciplinary

Every year in August
in Edinburgh, Scotland

edfringe.com ↗

Festival Off Avignon

#Multidisciplinary

Every year in July
in Avignon, France

festivaloffavignon.com ↗

SIPAM – Sibiu Performing Arts Market

#Multidisciplinary

Every year in June
in Sibiu, Romania

sibiuartsmarket.ro ↗

YPAM – Yokohama International Performing Arts Meeting

#Multidisciplinary

Every year in February
(from 2026)

in Yokohama, Japan

ypam.jp ↗

YPAM is the most important platform for the performing arts in Asia.

ABCs

of Points of Contact and Mobility Support

In the ABCs of Points of Contact and Mobility Support, we will introduce you to platforms, networks, funding programs, support programs and advice opportunities that can help you in your distribution work. We will highlight particularly relevant distribution opportunities and formats as well as programs that support mobility. You can also find a continuously updated overview online in the Freie Szene Kompass, which is available at: pap-berlin.de/freie-szene-kompass ↗.

B

Bundesverband Freie Darstellende Künste e.V. (BFDK, the German Federal Association for the Independent Performing Arts)
darstellende-kuenste.de/en ↗

The Bundesverband Freie Darstellende Künste (the German Federal Association of the Independent Performing Arts) is the umbrella organization of the respective state associations of the independent performing arts throughout Germany and represents some 27,000 artists and culture makers. It is dedicated

to improving working conditions and social security, supporting the qualification and networking of its members and advising politicians and business people. In addition, the BFDK is also active in national and international associations, such as the →International Network of Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM) and the European Umbrella Association of the Independent Performing Arts (EAIPA).

The BFDK offers regular workshops on a variety of topics that

are also intended for independent producers and distributors. In addition, the digital toolkit Producing Sustainably: nachhaltig.darstellende-kuenste.de/toolkit ↗ (only in German) can also be found on the website of the association. It contains over 200 practical measures that support sustainable actions in the everyday life of artistic production. The rubric Transportation and Mobility is of special interest for distribution work. In addition, the BFDK also supports, amongst others, → Festival-friends and → produktionsbande.

Berlin's Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion

berlin.de/sen/kultgz ↗

(only in German)

The Department for Culture funds Berlin's cultural landscape in its broadness and diversity. A large portion of the funding is dedicated to 70 permanently funded cultural institutions and an additional amount goes to individual funding and project funding. Funding decisions are made on the principles of transparency, fair processes and equal treatment and are made according to the application principle and on the foundations of comprehensible criteria, especially artistic quality. Independent advisory committees and professional juries provide advice about the allocation of the funding. The specific funding programs include, amongst other:

Global Exchange Grants from the State of Berlin—for all disciplines: Artists working in all genres can apply for study trips for artistic collaborations abroad. The call for

applications is published once per year in the summer/fall for trips taking place in the following year.

Cultural Exchange Grants from the State of Berlin: Istanbul, Paris, New York, Tokyo: Artists working within the individual genres can apply for residencies that are offered by a fixed cooperation partner. In the field of the performing arts, there is a call for applications Cité Internationale des Arts in Paris. The call for applications is published once per year in the summer/fall for residencies taking place in the following year.

KiA Funding Program: Since 2022, this program has provided performance fees as well as funding for performance venues working in the field of the performing arts for young audiences. The open calls for applications are published by the districts of the state of Berlin.

D

Dachverband Tanz Deutschland (DTD, the German Dance Association)
dachverband-tanz.de/en ↗

The Dachverband Tanz Deutschland (DTD, the Umbrella Association of Dance in Germany) has worked since 2006 as an alliance of the outstanding organizations and institutions for artistic dance in Germany as a nationwide platform and cultural policy representative. At the federal level, the DTD is the lead organization of Kreativ-Transfer and co-lead organization of TANZPAKT Stadt-Land-Bund; furthermore, it is the lead organization for the CCCberlin

project, supported by the state of Berlin and with funding from EFRE. Since 2018, the DTD has been the legal entity and event organizer of the German Dance Award and operates the streaming and knowledge platform tanz:digital.

Kreativ-Transfer supports the international networking activities and visibility of companies and artists as well as producers, managers and agents in the performing arts (et.al). Specifically, the program funds the participation in international trade fairs and festivals—as individual trips or accompanied prospecting trips. In 2024, Kreativ-Transfer put on the first German showcase at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. In addition, the program offers opportunities for the transfer of knowledge, the exchange of experiences and for the professionalization of the individuals with workshops and networking meetings. Kreativ-Transfer is funded by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM).

Furthermore, the DTD has initiated and accompanied various initiatives and programs for producers in recent years; these also include the initiative InfoPlus. Since 2012, this initiative has supported the exchange and networking between independent producers, agents, managers and independent production offices—and with an international focus since 2016. In the past years, there have been numerous international networking meetings. In addition, in cooperation with → produktionsbande, there was a further education and exchange

program for producers in 2024/2025 covering the topics of international relationships, networking and contexts and, in 2025, an international producers residency was realized with the European producers network PAMPA.

In addition, DTD is a cooperation partner with the project → touring artists, which provides information and advice to artists and creatives regarding all administrative questions that have to do with international mobility.

Deutsches Zentrum des Internationalen Theaterinstituts
(German Center of the International Theater Institute)

iti-germany.de/en ↗

The International Theater Institute (ITI) is the largest organization for the performing arts in the world and was founded upon the initiative of UNESCO in 1948 to support the exchange between theater makers and the understanding between cultures. It is a global international theater network that is represented with national centers in 86 countries and which dedicates itself to the freedom of artistic expression and cultural diversity in theater. The German Center of the ITI organizes exchange and encounter formats, discourse and cultural policy formats, provides advisement and support and brings together information and knowledge.

F

Festivalfriends
festivalfriends.de ↗

Festivalfriends is a national alliance of what is now twelve festivals of the independent performing arts in Germany that is dedicated to the networking, exchange of experiences and strengthening of existing festival structures. The alliance provides a variety of formats such as &FRIENDS BESUCH (VISIT), &FRIENDS GASTSPIEL (GUEST PERFORMANCE), &FRIENDS LABOR (LAB) and &FRIENDS FESTIVAL, in order to support artists, network productions, make artistic collaborations possible and to support cultural policy discourse.

Festivals generally offer a great opportunity for becoming acquainted with new performance venues and making contacts nationwide—these are important foundations for successful distribution work.

G

Goethe-Institut
goethe.de/en/kul/tut.html ↗

The Goethe-Institut is responsible for German cultural policy abroad and concentrates on shared international cultural exchange. While it does not directly support the tours of independent artists, the Goethe-Institut does offer funding programs that can make other forms of international cooperation possible.

I

IETM (International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts)
ietm.org/en ↗

IETM—the International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts is one of the oldest and largest international culture networks. It is composed of over 500 organizations and individual members that work in the independent performing arts community, primarily in Europe, but also worldwide in the fields of theater, dance, circus, performance art and media art. It serves as a platform for artists, producers and cultural organizations to network, exchange knowledge and to develop joint projects.

Alongside a comprehensive schedule of programming of discourse and events on current topics within the field of the independent performing arts, the IETM also provides numerous opportunities for networking, increasing the visibility of one's own work internationally, exchanging knowledge and engaging in research projects and political initiatives. To successfully tour internationally, it is also worth being informed about cultural policy, as well as funding opportunities and residences. The IETM can help to find independent and alternative paths of distribution, for example, through digital or hybrid distribution strategies, coproductions with international partners or through alternative performance locations and self-organized networks.

Organizations and freelance / independent artists who are active in the performing arts can become members and benefit from exclusive offers as well as networks and databases. The costs of a membership are determined through the organization's or individual's respective income.

J

JOINT ADVENTURES

jointadventures.net/en ↗

JOINT ADVENTURES is an internationally active event organizer in the field of contemporary dance and performance at the intersection to other artistic disciplines. JOINT ADVENTURES realizes festivals, series of guest performances, workshops and projects that take place in public space. In addition, it has successfully dedicated itself for years to the structural support of as well as the exchange between German and international artists and event organizers to strengthen the presence of dance makers who live in Germany both domestically as well as abroad. JOINT ADVENTURES is the co-founder of DANCE PLATFORM GERMANY and has been its co-event organizer since 1994.

JOINT ADVENTURES is the legal entity behind NATIONALES PERFORMANCE NETZ (NPN). The funding program has the goal of supporting the exchange and distribution of contemporary dance and theater within Germany as well as to create incentives for a stronger (inter)national rotation of existing and new productions. Specifically,

guest performances within Germany are supported by the NPN Guest Performance Funds for Dance and for Theater. The NPN Impulse Fund for Dance & Theater supports new cooperations between different German federal states that secure development potentials and enable new “tangents” of cooperation. In supplement to this, the NPN Co-Production Fund for Dance and the NPN Fund for International Guest Performances expand the exchange between artists living in Germany, event organizers and international partners.

O

On the Move

on-the-move.org ↗

On the Move is the international information network that has dedicated itself to international cultural mobility since 2002. With 88 members from 32 different countries, it provides those working in the field of culture with free information about mobility and the corresponding funding opportunities. Co-financed by the European Union and the French Ministry of Culture, On the Move conducts a multiple-year program that provides support to local, regional, national, European and international artists and culture makers for the sustainable development of cultural ecosystems.

Amongst other offerings, On the Move provides a continuously updated list of open calls for applications, comprehensive guidelines for the financing of cultural mobility

as well as a monthly newsletter that is published in German. The so-called Mobility Info Points (MIPs, in partnership with Internationale Gesellschaft der Bildenden Künste e.V.) provide practical support for administrative hurdles such as visas, social insurance or taxes, including a point of contact in Germany (→ touring artists). In addition, the network provides access to current results of research and data about topics such as endangered and displaced artists, ecological sustainability or parenthood in the cultural sector.

P

PADA (International Alliance of Producers, Agents and Distributors of Performing Arts)

pada.network ↗

PADA (Producers, Agents, Distributors Alliance) is a global network of professionals that supports performing artists in production and with touring that was founded in 2020. With more than 160 members from more than 30 countries around the globe, it supports collaboration, sustainability and the exchange of knowledge. PADA has existed as a registered association with headquarters in Düsseldorf since 2024.

The network actively supports mobility by functioning as a global peer-to-peer platform for producers, agents and distributors working in the performing arts. According to the founding principle of a horizontal, non-hierarchical collective, the focus at PADA is placed not on an institutional structure, but

instead on the establishment of trust, solidarity and mutual care. This makes the network especially receptive to newcomers, especially from regions with lower visibility in the global touring markets. The members work together to share touring opportunities, plan joint presentations and support the international circulation of productions. Through the regular exchange of information, contacts and resources, they support each other while navigating different cultural and logistical landscapes. This exchange of knowledge provides a greater ability for underrepresented voices to be heard and allows artists access to new contexts. In doing so, PADA consistently follows the goal of making the work of the members visible, supporting newcomers as well as increasing the sustainable collaboration and the mobility of the artists represented through regular meetings.

produktionsbande

produktionsbande.org/en ↗

produktionsbande is a nationwide, decentralized network of producers working in the independent performing arts in Germany. It supports the exchange of knowledge and bundles specific cultural policy positions. Between 2021 and 2025, the network was supported by the program Verbindungen fördern (Promoting Connections) and helped members of the independent performing arts community to facilitate more exchange and gain more visibility and mobility with formats like network meetings, residencies and mentoring programs. Numerous

work groups developed supplemental, needs-oriented programs. produktionsbande explicitly supports and professionalizes not only artists but especially producers, a target group which is often overlooked, but which is essential for the infrastructure of the independent performing arts community. Here is an overview of the formats:

Hosted visits are multiple-day, curated exchange formats for becoming acquainted with local working fields and expertises. The core focus is placed on the transfer of knowledge regarding funding structures, artistic practice and cultural policy framework conditions. The format strengthens mobility through new networks and national cooperations.

Network meetings bring members of the community working in artistic production together both on the regional as well as on the national level. Here, the focus is placed on the collegial exchange regarding current developments and cultural policy debates as well as the formation of strong national connections that support visibility and mobility.

Residencies provide open-ended space for the artistic-producerial practice outside of the usual working environment. Over the course of ten days, the participants can dedicate themselves to a self-selected question and explore new spaces for thought and encounters. The format supports mobility by opening up new spaces for thought and encounters between artistic practice, structural questions and national collaboration.

T

The Information Center of the Berlin Performing Arts Program
pap-berlin.de/en/what-we-offer/information-center ↗

The Information Center is the central point of contact for all questions concerning artistic work as a freelancer as well as questions concerning production and funding opportunities. Artists and culture makers working within the independent performing arts community will find support here that is free of charge. No matter whether you are just starting out or if you are a pro with many years of experience: the advisement sessions, workshops as well as the networking and information events cover a broad spectrum of topics, provide space for individual questions and support the continuous exchange of knowledge.

All of the current workshops, seminars and other qualification and networking opportunities are listed in the calendar available at pap-berlin.de/en ↗ and are also bundled and sent monthly via the LAFT newsletter.

touring artists
touring-artists.info ↗

touring artists is the German “mobility information point”. The initiative provides information and advice about administrative questions that arise from international work (visas, residence, contracts, employment, taxes, social insurance, transportation, customs, insurance policies, copyright law & mobility

support). The offered opportunities are for all genres and are intended for artists living in Germany who are planning and realizing projects abroad, representations of cultural institutions or groups in German that collaborate with artists from abroad, artists from abroad who are temporarily working in Germany as well as artists from non-EU countries who want to establish themselves in Berlin. The free advisement opportunities include personal advisement, a comprehensive funding guide and a funding database.

touring artists is a joint project of the → German Center of the International Theater Institute, the International Association of Visual Arts (IGBK) and → Dachverband Tanz Deutschland (the Umbrella Association of Dance in Germany). It is funded by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM).

Checklist

for the Guest Performance Contract

Have you successfully mastered the first steps and received an invitation to perform your production at a theater or at a festival? Bravo! It is now the right moment to specify the collaboration between you and the event organizer clearly and fairly in a guest performance contract with the event organizer.

The guest performance contract is a written agreement between two parties: the producer (that is, you as an artist or an artist group) and the event organizer (the theater or festival). It specifies all of the important details for the successful course of a performance and is the result of the negotiations between both parties. This allows misunderstandings to be avoided, clearly regulates the responsibilities and clearly defines the responsibilities for the costs that are associated with the performance.

In the following, you will find a checklist with all of the important information that should be included in a guest performance contract.

Content of the Contract

- The names and contact information of the two parties (event organizer and artist or artist group)
- The exact title, date and location of the performance(s)
- Promotional material (e. g. photos, event marketing text and videos), including the corresponding usage rights
- The technical rider, which clearly enumerates all of the technical requirements so that the realizability of the production can be checked as early as possible
- The additional activities that may surround the performance (e. g. post-performance discussions, interviews or workshops)
- The number of complimentary tickets for the artistic team per performance
- The clarification of the rights for photos/videos/audio recordings during the performance
- Is a rehearsal at the performance location possible?
- The plan of action in the event of a cancellation
- The consideration of how to handle cases of force majeure such as natural disasters or epidemics
- The date, location and signature of both parties

In the contract, it should also be clarified who is responsible for the following expenses:

- Costs for the performance
- Taxes and any contributions for social insurance that may be due
- Costs that are associated with the journey: travel, accommodation, board
- Copyrights (e. g. GEMA)
- Necessary insurance coverage for team members, the set design, et cetera
- Other expenses (e. g. translations)

Example of a Guest Performance Contract

LAFT Berlin - Landesverband freie darstellende Künste e. V.,—together with around 30 other cultural associations, is part of a knowledge pool that contains various contract templates in German and English, including a guest performance contract. The pool is provided by the law firm Kanzlei Laaser for the arts and cultural sector. All members of the cultural associations that are part of the pool can use these templates free of charge.

You can login to the pool here:

kanzlei-laaser.com/wissenspool/mitgliederbereich/login ↗

As a member of LAFT, you can easily request the password for the contract pool by sending an email to info@pap-berlin.de ↗. Aren't you a member yet? Then take a look at laft-berlin.de/informationen ↗ or send an email directly to mitglieder@laft-berlin.de ↗.

About Us and Publication Information

With its diverse range of opportunities, the Berlin Performing Arts Program increases the visibility of artistic work, bundles knowledge, creates synergies and initiates cooperations—within the independent performing arts community and beyond. We offer advisement sessions, workshops and networking opportunities free of charge, both for newcomers as well as professionals. You can find more about these in our calendar and on our website at pap-berlin.de/en.

Do You Need Even More Support?

Freie Szene Kompass

pap-berlin.de/freie-szene-kompass

In the Freie Szene Kompass, our digital industry directory of the independent performing arts community, you will also find an overview of current funding programs, advisement opportunities, additional training options and much, much more.

The Performing Arts Guide

pag.berlin/en

The Performing Arts Guide provides an overview of Berlin's diverse independent performing arts community. It features festivals, get-togethers, initiatives and also includes a directory of venues.

Initial Advisement Session

pap-berlin.de/en/what-we-offer/information-center

Or would like to sign up directly for an initial advisement session? Then just send an email to us at beratung@pap-berlin.de and we will find the right event for you.

The LAFT Berlin Newsletter

You can also subscribe to the LAFT newsletter to stay up-to-date with everything that the Berlin Performing Arts Program has to offer. To do so, just send an email with the subject "Newsletter bestellen" to us at newsletter@laft-berlin.de.

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Program Director:

Janina Benduski

Concept:

Catherine Launay

Editorial Team:

Antonia Deckert, Catherine Launay

Copy Editing:

Nicolas Humbert, Vera Fleischer

Translation:

Daniel Brunet

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Ute Classen

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Performing Arts
Programm
Berlin

LAFT Landesverband freie
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BERLIN

Senatsverwaltung
für Kultur und
Gesellschaftliches Zusammenleben

BERLIN



Kofinanziert von der
Europäischen Union

Innovatives
Potential
KULTUR **INP**

