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Do you wanna come outside and play?" Seminar for Artists looking to work outdoors and tour in the UK and internationally

These notes were collated during "Do you wanna come outside and play?" Seminar for Artists looking to work outdoors and tour in the UK and internationally organised by XTRAX, Freedom Festival and Hull Truck Theatre on 30th November 2018 in Hull.

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Image 1: Block by NoFit State & Motionhouse at Freedom Festival 2018

What is Outdoor Arts?

Shows

- Shows that are taking place in the **public space**
- **Formats:** static (taking place in one space), walkabout (travel through the audiences and in the space), parade (larger shows that take place processionaly)
- **Genres:** theatre, dance, circus, sound, visual, interactive installation, puppetry, music, etc.
- **Kinds** of shows: visual, narrative story, conceptual experience, interactive or not, mapping...
- **Scales:** intimate (like theatre for one) to epic large scale. We normally classify the scale of the show in terms of the audiences they can perform to: large scale is usually for at least 2,000 / 3,000 people.
 - Boundaries between small and medium scale are not so set – maybe you have two performers, but show can be performed to a large audience; you can have a small-scale show that can be performed in a big square, you can say it's a small scale show but with high potential reach. On the other end if you have six performers but the show can only be performed to.
 - Scale can be determined by context in which you perform; content of the show comes first, then festival and artist can think about the location and how the performance areas is set up. You can make a tiny piece that in the right place can be performed to thousands of people.
 - While not many companies have got the resources to create large scale work, we are also seeing the rise of the mega event. This is a parallel universe, as the festival sector does not command the kind of budget that, for example, City of Culture initiatives command. There is a huge market for small / mid-scale work.
 - Often artists work in collaboration with festival and local communities to make large scale shows. Festivals are interested in working with artists, not only buying shows off the shelf
- Well-connected sector, UK festivals and international festivals (very developed in Europe, some interesting festivals in Asia, America and Australia)
- Time of the year: May to September
- Time of the day: day time with some night shows subject to curfew – this varies between UK and other countries
- Networks: Without Walls (commissioning Consortium of 18 partners), Coasters, Northern Festivals Network, independent festivals, council lead/private/mix
- Think about how a festival is funded – sometimes one festival might open up other nine connections – this might open up opportunities for you.
- Europe: France is the biggest scene, they tend to have an off and on programme – on programme is the official programme where artists receive fees, accommodation. Artists taking part in the off programme might not receive fee but only the money from the hat.
- Circostrada is a useful network, European Network of Circus and Street Arts.
- In Situ is a network of 16 festivals that work in public spaces. They are developing a MOOC coming out next summer. The network is very interested in artists that transform public space and at work that looks at Europe.

Audiences

- Outdoor Arts audiences are distinctive. Unlike audiences for many other artforms and cultural activities, they tend to be representative of the demographics of the public in their area.
- The data shows that audiences for Outdoor Arts are local, drawn from their immediate hinterland
- Outdoor Arts has the power to amplify a sense of community, and to change people's perceptions of a place. The Outdoor Arts events included here are of different scales,
- Outdoor Arts events attract high numbers of audiences, many of whom don't often take part in other state-supported or commercial cultural activity.
- Outdoor Arts audiences are young and ethnically diverse
- Artists value highly the opportunity of talking to audiences before and after their performance
- By working outdoors and performing to people that wouldn't usually engage with other arts events, you can potentially have a bigger impact on people's lives.
- Many events directly involve their community as volunteers and creative participants, which helps to explain why the sector is so effective at engaging with audiences in such diverse settings.

You can find out more about the makeup of Outdoor Arts audiences by reading the latest Audience Agency report: www.theaudienceagency.org/insight/outdoor-arts-audience-report

Conventions

- Usually outdoor arts season takes place between spring to beginning of autumn (although some light, Diwali and Christmas festivals in winter)
- Companies that work outdoors often work indoors as well or do some corporate work as well
- Number of shows per day: up to three shows (when it's small scale), but mostly two per day
- Outdoor Arts events take place in different contexts: city centre, rural environment, green field festivals, parks, towns
- Often managed by temporary staff, time-limited
- Creative process: shows need to be presented several times in front of audience to find their feet
- It can be very useful to have open rehearsals to get feedback and adapt your show according to how people react. Try to get advice from somebody whose artistic criteria you trust.
- Long touring life: successful outdoor shows can continue touring for many years. If you want it to have a long touring life what do you need to consider?
- Rework the show according to what is poignant and relevant.
- Shows take a long time to develop
- Consider the context in which you are going to perform: sometimes there will be a specific cultural reference which is going to have a very different reaction.
- Be ready for things that are likely to happen: some things that might look improvised are not actually improvised (e.g. people with phones, certain groups of people passing by, etc.)
- You will share the site with many others, so it's important to be self-sufficient. Even though on-site team are very helpful, they can be dealing with a number of shows at once.

- Etiquette: artists can be your best networks: think about the use of the space if you have a walkabout and be mindful of not leaving a mess for the next artist in your performing area.

What to think if you want to make an outdoor show?

- See other shows, identify similar companies, learn from other companies, expand your artistic vocabulary
- Consider where your show would stand in the context of the existing landscape
- Consider your context: no barriers to separate you from the audience, can't warn audiences about things that might not be suitable, family audiences, there will be different sensibilities and ethnicities.
- What is it about the show that means it has to be outdoors? What will it make stand out?
- To know if you're any good you have to have seen really excellent work

Develop your ideas, then think about:

- Set: think about it as 360-degree piece, is it going to be durable? Does it stand the wind, the rain and the heat? How can you make a set that can be transported easily?
- Who is your team? Are they excited about working outdoors? Some artists don't really know or understand the reality of it.

Pricing your show

1 day	Cost	Number	Days	Total
Performers fees	£200	3	1	£600
Travel days	£75	4	2	£600
Per Diems	£25	4	2	£200
Director fees	£200	1	1	£400
Performance materials	£50	1	1	£50
Overheads/Management fee	20% of the costs	(x0.2)		£370
Total minimum fee				£2,220
Asking price				£2,400

This corresponds to a small scale show with 4 people (3 performers and 1 director) on tour.

- Not set rule in terms of pricing, but lots of guidelines (ITC rates, ACE fair pay). The amount of money that you will pay to your performers will depend from experience of artists, what they are doing and other factors.
- 2 days rate is not double of 1-day rate because actual costs won't be double
- Fee you can charge depends on different factors: profile, publicity, number of performers...
- Pricing strategies to promote your show: offering discounted rates if bookers book in advance or if they recommend your show to other promoters.
- Often programmers are asking to negotiate their fees - work out what you can do and don't go below that
- Price your travelling costs accurately, as changing costs can become quite difficult for a programmer
- Also let know if you need some specific tech on site
- You need to have some money for your administration, website, etc. Assess how you are going to survive as a company and be sustainable as a business.
- Festivals will try to stretch their budget if there is a show that they really want.
- Performing as artists that do this as a side project doesn't undermine the market and other artists, as it fits in a very specific category

Find out more about Pricing and Outdoor Arts show by reading the notes from a past Seminar organised by XTRAX and ISAN (now Outdoor Arts UK):

xtrax.org.uk/app/uploads/2018/06/Pricing-summary-2017.pdf

Technical Rider

- **Info on show** (copy, touring team, duration, how many/day)
 - **Schedule** (get in, get out, time between shows)
 - **Space** (measurements, type of surface, desired and min)
 - **Sound** requirements
 - **Access** needs (including vehicle access but also specific)
 - **Lighting** requirements
 - **Stewarding**, security
 - **Set & staging** options
 - **Wet weather** plan
-
- Legibility – keep only small example
 - Different depending on show, with images, sketches, drawings etc to be specific, especially around set and technical equipment
 - Motorised vehicles, fire, night time

Example Technical Rider

The Spurting Man Technical Provisions

Our shows are complete and exacting pieces of theatre designed specifically for performance in outdoor spaces. Whilst the company does not wish to burden the booker with unusual or ridiculous requests it is essential that the following requirements are provided in full in order that the performances at your event are able to take place successfully to the mutual benefit of all parties.

Daylight Shows

Flat performance area. Clear of overhead obstruction 6 metres by 4 metres.

Supply of clean water from either standpipe or service tap. Must be within 30 metres of the performance site and be accessible at least 90 minutes before each performance. A hose will be run from this tap to the performance site. It will not be connected during the show.

13 amp electrical power source for submersible pump.

Access to the performance area from 1 hour before the first performance and for one hour after the last performance e.g. First performance 1.00pm second performance 3.30 pm access to performance area 12.00 noon - 5.00 pm.

Secure dressing room with minimum of mirror and sink or bowl with water supply preferably with shower. Within 200 metres of the performance site.

Steward from the host organisation to assist the company.

Night Shows as for the daylight shows plus lighting the minimum requirement being six 500 Watt white light halogen lamps. Exact lighting requirements should be discussed with the company in advance

Note

A minimum time of one and one half hours is required between start times of the shows for resetting the show. All the performances should be in the same location on any day.

Risk Assessment

- A Risk Assessment is a list of the potential hazards or risks that your performance may cause and how you are minimising them.
- Rate level of risk and end up with table where you assess all risks involved in the performance and how you will deal with them.
- Refer to template in [Appendix 1](#)

PLI

Insurance that protects you from legal claims made against you in case of injury to another person (other than someone you employ) or damage to their property.

Promoting your show

Visiting Showcases / Festivals as a delegate

- Showcases are events for professionals working in outdoor arts or interested in the sector. They give professionals the opportunity to meet each other, learn about the sector, see outdoor work and form relationships.
- Main UK Showcases take place as part of: [Greenwich+Docklands International Festival](#), [Out There Festival](#) and [Freedom Festival](#)
- Research international showcases as a delegate first – costs to attend are relatively low compared to taking a full show.
- Understand the best places for you to visit.
- Speaking local languages helps in forming connections with promoters.
- Go through delegate list if published, take comms material with you
- Arrange meetings in advance if possible
- When networking with promoters, ask them about their festivals first, before you go in with the sales pitch. Make sure your show could fit into their festival. Never push and always listen.
- Be prepared to explain who you are and what you do quickly, better to build connections and relationships that might lead to a booking in the future. Practice your pitch in advance and try to make it as clear and short as possible.
- Sometimes there will be areas where festivals and artists eat together; these are great places to meet programmers
- Print one promo pack and have it with you at key festivals – follow up with digital versions
- Don't print dates on flyers, include your weblink so you can re-use flyers
- Watch as many shows and pitches as you can and learn from them.
- Make a note of all the contacts made – you will usually meet a big number of professionals, so it's important to keep track of the contacts made (make notes that help you remember and write them next to their business cards, take pictures, etc)
- Follow up conversations immediately – It is important to be fast

If you can't go – is there any way that you can build your presence? This can be online or by getting your material over (sometimes you can send brochures/print, or perhaps you know any other companies who will attend?)

Databases and Marketing

- Start from Delegate list from showcases
- Building your own database, including contacts from showcase delegate lists but also local projects like [CPPs](#) and festival networks, [Outdoor Arts UK listings](#); apply to perform at smaller festivals first.
- If you are new to the outdoor sector, but not to the indoor – what connections can you make? Often outdoor festivals are part of an indoor organisation – can you build on that relationship? Who are your consistent bookers?
- Ask partners to endorse you and introduce you to other local authorities and festivals
- Research similar projects from other companies and add their touring festival contacts to your database as well. See what agent they use. Once you find a festival, do research on past programmes to see if your show would fit.
- Don't bother with info@ email addresses or generic email addresses.
- Creating and maintaining a database takes a lot of time.
- Send update mailings on what you've achieved over the performance season.
Mailing lists emails are harder to navigate because there is not actual relationship.
- When you can see that they handpicked their contacts
- Categorise contacts and filter communications accordingly.
- Meaningful communication takes time and commitment but does not cost much money (newsletter, mail shots, direct mailing etc)
- Think of a strategy: end of summer 'this is what we've done and our next steps, looking for seed commission and support in kind', then in a month 'this is the show we want to take out to festivals', then pursue later in the year
- Timeline – Usually programming decisions made 6 to 9 months before the event, but some spaces sometimes need to be filled last minute
- Communicating with **UK or international promoters needs a different** approach
 - UK promoters: like to have clear information, happy to talk about costs pretty early on in the communications, clear promo pack
 - French promoters: like to know the company, the artistic ideas and the philosophy behind the work, include drawings to reflect ideas of creative team if possible
 - Always helps to have native speakers in the team and to translate promo pack and info if possible to another language
- GDPR – you can add an email you received during a networking event to your mailing list as it's a b2b negotiation – you can visit the [ICO website](#) for more details on GDPR and [PECR](#) regulations
- If you don't have budget for Mail Chimp or other big mailing systems, look for cheaper ones around.

Relationship building with programmers

- The majority of programmers want to see your show live
- International promoters sometimes book shows by watching still camera films
- Every programmer has already a long list of artists they want to book, so it's important to create a long-term relationship with programmer
- Quite often programmers meet artists by watching a show, but they will book another show in the future

- Apply for funding including budget to invite programmers to come and see your work, if you can help financially in any way that is helpful.
- Previews are a very useful tool, though be careful to show something that is absolutely not ready
- Research and look at the context of the place you are offering the show to
- Programmers really value when an artist talks about another artists well and have honest conversation about shows

Marketing Essentials

- Be memorable and make your communications personal. Have a striking image and witty marketing materials. It probably takes 1 – 3 years for people to get to know who you are.
- 2-page pdf with selected images, show info, tech, fees
- Ensure you have strong marketing materials: ask bookers for feedback and quotes, document the audience and their reactions, create strong visual materials. (Make sure you credit any material appropriately). Have one main image and work with promoters to decide what works best and use it early on.
- Film the entire performance with a still camera for promoters, no edits
- Make a trailer with what you have, you don't need a big budget – examples.
- Upload your video trailers on YouTube, rather than on Facebook – festivals and network can link a YouTube video on their website plus it's more professional to have all your video archive in one place
 - Example 1: [Phone Box](#)
 - Example 2: [Buck a Brenda](#)
 - Example 3: [Baba Yaga's House](#)
- Promo pack: The show, the company, other areas of work (education, research, bespoke), workshops, fees, creative team.
- Make sure your website represents your work accurately and create a page for promoters on your website, or a promoters' section for each show. Upload your dossier and technical rider, along with any other material you can share.
- Social media: if you're new to social media, Facebook and Twitter are the two main platforms. You can use Instagram for audience facing comms, but if you don't have time don't open profiles just to have them. Focus on one and build on that.
- Good content is what works best – share your trailer videos, a quote from a member of the audience with a picture of the show, short vox pops with audience, snippets from your rehearsals, interview sound-bites with members of the team.
- Add your profile to the XTRAX [International Directory](#) – a free resource used by bookers and programmers from across the country to research shows

Performing your work at Showcase Festivals

- **Get your work in front of national bookers first.** National bookers will travel internationally and promote UK work to foreign programmers. Engage with the strong outdoor arts networks in the UK – ISAN, XTRAX, NASA, to get your work noticed.
- **Invite promoters** to your performances and check what you could offer them to encourage them coming
- Create **flyers / postcards** to hand out to promoters and audiences

- **Pitching sessions** (in the UK and abroad) are a great way of getting ideas across without huge investment in cash to put a show in front of people.
- **Get a stall** at showcases if suitable and have a dedicated person to be there
- **The best way to get the word out is when performing:** be ready to sell the work (you or your producer), know your fees, take your tour calendar, be aware of additional engagement activities and your tech specs. Ensure you have enough time to network.
- **Don't accept a short notice change of performing site or times.** Once your show is in the programme bookers will expect it to appear where the brochure says so. Never go on late in a showcase festival

Resources

XTRAX [resources for artists](#)

[Outdoor Arts UK](#) - listings, membership, publications

UK Organisations: [NASA](#), [Articulture](#) (Wales), [Surge](#) (Scotland)

UK Festival Networks: [Without Walls](#), [Coasters](#), [Northern Festivals Network](#), [Applause Rural Touring](#), [Circulate](#)

UK Events: [XTRAX Showcases](#) and Networking Meeting, [SeaChange](#) Symposium, [Freedom Festival](#) Symposium, [NASA \(For the Love of it\)](#), [Emergency Exit Arts \(Itch\)](#), [Outdoor Arts UK \(Ideas Summit\)](#), [ISACS](#) events, [Caravan Showcases](#), [Devoted & Disgruntled](#) events

International organisations and networks: [Circostrada](#), [On the Move](#), [In Situ](#)

Large Festivals in Europe: [Fira Tarrega](#) (SP), [Tete a Tete](#) (DE), [Theater Op De Markt](#) (BE), [City of Wings](#) (BE), [Chalon dans la rue](#) (FR), [Aurillac](#) (FR), [Spoffin](#) (NL), [La Strada](#) (AT), [Miramiro](#) (BE) and many others.

OUTDOOR EVENT RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

OUTDOOR EVENT:

LOCATION:
.....
.....

EVENT ACTIVITY:

NO. OF PERSONS EMPLOYED/STAFF/STEWARDS:

ASSESSOR (print):

ASSESSMENT DATE: SIGNATURE:

ASSESSMENT DISCUSSED AND AGREED WITH EVENT ORGANISER:

ORGANISER NAME (print):

AGREEMENT DATE: ORGANISER'S SIGNATURE:

ASSESSMENT REVIEW DATES (annually/change occurs):

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

Date: By Whom:

RISK ASSESSMENT

HAZARD AND RISK IDENTIFICATION

EVENT: LOCATION: DATE:..... SHEET No:..... OF.....

SIGNIFICANT HAZARDS IDENTIFIED	PERSONS AT RISK	RISK RATING			CONTROL MEASURES	DATE ACTIONED and SIGNATURE
		Hazard x Risk = Risk Level				

SIGNIFICANT HAZARDS IDENTIFIED	PERSONS AT RISK	RISK RATING			CONTROL MEASURES	DATE ACTIONED and SIGNATURE
		Hazard x Risk = Risk Level				

RISK ASSESSMENT (example)

HAZARD AND RISK IDENTIFICATION

EVENT: LOCATION: DATE:..... SHEET No:..... OF.....

SIGNIFICANT HAZARDS IDENTIFIED	PERSONS AT RISK	RISK RATING			CONTROL MEASURES	DATE ACTIONED and SIGNATURE
		Hazard	Risk	Risk Level		

Risk Rating		
Hazard (Severity)	Value	Risk (Likelihood)
Negligible	1	Unlikely
Slight	2	Possible
Moderate	3	Quite Possible
Severe	4	Likely
Very Severe	5	Very Likely

Hazard Value x Risk Value = Risk Level

Ranking of Risk (Risk Level)	
1 – 4	Low Risk
5 – 15	Medium Risk
16 - 25	High Risk

Low Risk – risk can be acceptable.

Medium Risk – acceptable with adequate control measures in place.

High Risk – action must be prioritised and timetabled to reduce risk to an acceptable level.