caravan top tips: international networking

Going international isn't just about exporting a show - it's about entering a conversation with new presenters, audiences, local ecosystems and cultural contexts that might reshape how your work lives in the world. Approaching touring abroad with curiosity, sensitivity and care can transform the experience from a logistical exercise into a powerful space for artistic exchange. In this respect, networking offers much more than an opportunity to try to sell a show - it can help sow the seeds for a long-term international life for your artistic practice.

Building and maintaining international connections and reputation directly affects how far your work can travel, how it evolves, and whether it's sustainable long-term.

As part of the professional development programme for assembly artists 2026, caravan's international associate Sophia Victoria, Homo Novus theatre festival programme curator Santa Remere, and producer Jo Mackie were invited to share some tips on how to present work with confidence and understanding and cultivate meaningful connections and opportunities for working internationally, whilst being mindful of the cultural awareness needed. Below are some key takeaways to support your journey from the elevator pitches to building lasting international partnerships.

1 Know your 'WHY'

Why am I making this kind of work? Why do I want to work internationally? Why am I interested in this festival? Why is my network important to me? Why am I doing this?

This helps you:

- understand your practice and be clearer and more confident about the right direction for your work
- approach connection-making with authenticity, joy and genuine curiosity
- make a compelling pitch and communicate your work to others
- ensure your tours and partnerships are a success.

2 Be Intentional about networking

Know where to meet potential performing arts programmers and partners.

- International industry platforms, marketplaces, networks and conferences e.g.
    - International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA),
    - International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts (IETM),
    - CINARS International Conference of the Performing Arts,
    - ASSITEJ, the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People,
    - Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM),
    - Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP),
    - European Dance Development Network (EDN),
    - Circostrada European Network for Circus and Outdoor Arts.
- Industry gatherings during international festivals or fringe festivals e.g. caravan's International Producers' Breakfast in Edinburgh.
- Participating in international showcases like caravan assembly.
- Find connections with a special interest in your niche at smaller festivals and events linked to your art form, show themes, and areas of expertise.
- Informal social spaces (bars, dinners, train journeys) are often where the most valuable conversations and connections happen.
- Social media platforms can lead to meaningful networking and IRL connections.

In-person networking events can feel overwhelming and be a sensory overload. Consider bringing a friend or taking tools to help you feel more comfortable in these environments. Inform the event organisers of your requirements (they may be able to offer things such as a quiet space). Find networking formats that suit your preferences.

Who do you already know? Chances are there are already some great opportunities awaiting you with the existing relationships you have. Reach out to reconnect.

3 Be prepared before a networking event

- Who will be there? - Identify a handful of key contacts, take a look at their programme and write a few talking points for each.
- Reach out before meeting (where appropriate).
- Prepare your "elevator" pitch.
- Update your online profile.
- Prepare marketing material.
- What is your goal? - Shift your mindset from "How do I get booked?" to "How do I build friendships and partnerships?" and "How do I best share this story, reach the right audiences and have a positive impact in the world?"

4 When introducing your work:

- Build a relationship - The best pitches feel like the start of a conversation. It's as much about the people as the work. You are both deciding whether you'd like to work together.
- Lead with your "why" - Help the person you're meeting understand how your work might resonate with their audiences or programme.
- Be reciprocal - Listen and ask questions. Show interest in their work and local context. Exchange contacts and resources.
- Be specific but open - Share the practical and technical details. Talk about money early and be understanding about different financial contexts. Be flexible to adapting your work to different spaces, cultures and budgets, collaboration or co-production possibilities whilst not compromising your artistic vision.
- Demonstrate alignment and credibility - e.g. previous touring or partnerships, support from funding organisations, awards, audience reach.
- Be considerate: especially in an international context, the person you're talking to may have different working styles, language & terminology, cultural/ political sensitivities, funding structures, touring models, audience preferences (e.g. humour, accessibility).

5 Try to get a personal introduction

From a colleague can be powerful if you're meeting or sending a message to someone you haven't met before in person.

If you're sending an invite, you're also much more likely to get a response if you make it personal rather than simply copying and pasting the same generic message for everyone.

Case study: Jo Mackie, Producer



Jo Fong & George Orange's The Rest of Our Lives was part of caravan assembly 2024. As a result of their involvement with assembly they were able to:

- connect with a number of festival presenters,
- received a British Council Connections Through Culture grant for a 3-week residency programme in collaboration with Padepokan Seni Bagong Kussudiardja (PSBK) in Indonesia in 2025,
- performed at the Homo Novus festival in Latvia and Under The Radar 2026 in the USA.

6 After the first meeting:

- Be proactive and responsive.
- Follow up promptly (within 7 days).
- Reference your conversation (as a reminder/ summary).
- Provide only high-quality and relevant materials/ links - programmers tend to receive a lot of material and have limited time.
- Keep it succinct and friendly.
- Suggest a next step.
- Remember to say thank you - if someone responds to your message, offers some useful information, offers to meet for a coffee, makes an introduction, invites you to an event.

7 Keep a note of your contacts

Add to a spreadsheet (or a system that works for you) to track:

- Who you met
- Where
- What was discussed
- Any actions to follow up
- When to follow up

8 Relationship development is slow

Just like any relationship based on trust, it needs to be built by:

- Consistent interactions.
- Delivering what you say you will.
- Clear and transparent communication.
- Respecting time.
- Understanding constraints.

It's not about how often you reach out, but how thoughtfully and intentionally you do.

Presenters who trust you are more likely to rebook, recommend, or co-present your work in other cities or countries and potentially be more flexible to your creative and technical ideas and needs. A single connection could unlock an entire touring network.

9 Be persistent

Opportunities can take months or years. When a conversation goes cold, know that this is normal and silence often means "not yet" rather than a rejection. Reasons include:

- Programming cycles (often 1–3 years ahead)
- Budget changes
- Internal priorities shifting
- Political context

What to do:

- Avoid pressuring the person but keep in touch when there's news/ updates of interest.
- Try suggesting a call or in-person meeting.

10 You are not alone.

Utilise arts networks and organisations like caravan who provide international resources, connection making opportunities and training sessions.

Additionally, make the most of your peers and support each other - collective visibility multiplies opportunity and international programmers notice ecosystems, movements & scenes. With your peers, you can:

- Share contacts
- Introduce each other
- Recommend work
- Share market intelligence
- Travel together to events

- Cross-promote
- Identify shared areas of interest, challenges and opportunities to work on together

Written by Sophia Victoria, 2026

Further resources

Networking tips from Edinburgh Fringe

Networks and Networking webinar

Country Briefings