

ONTARIO
PRESENTS

Virtual Networking Series

**A Guide for Artists and Companies
Preparing for a Virtual Showcase**



Who is Ontario Presents and what is the purpose of this document?

Information
About the
Virtual
Networking
Series

Ontario Presents is a province-wide network of **performing arts touring and presenting organizations** that work collaboratively to facilitate an equitable distribution of live, diverse performing arts shows – and their engagement with all citizens – into communities across Ontario.

This **Slide Deck** is intended to be a resource for performing artists/companies who are interested learning more about the **Virtual Networking Series**.

It will help inform potential applicants about the **presenting sector, block booking, touring** and other elements to help determine if showcasing is a good option for you as an artist/company.



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Why a virtual format rather than an in-person event?

For more than two decades, **Ontario Presents** had been proud to host **Ontario Contact** and **Contact ONTour** that had united the performing arts community through enriching showcasing and networking opportunities.

Although after consultation with provincial presenters, national agents, artists, and other stakeholders, it became evident that the **existing format no longer fit the evolving needs of the majority of the sector** and required a shift towards more inclusive, accessible, eco-conscious, and community-focused networking and showcasing opportunities in an online format.

Building upon this positive feedback, the **Virtual Networking Series (VNS)** was created to offer **virtual showcase** and various **online networking opportunities**.



What is the Virtual Networking Series?

Information About the Virtual Networking Series

The **Virtual Networking Series** is a **sequence of events** in the fall that provides opportunities for performing arts professionals to connect virtually. Events include the following:

- **Artist Showcases** (Oct 1-3, 2024) - an occasion for artists to have their work viewed by presenters from across Ontario.
- **Agent Pitches** (Sept 10-25, 2024) - an opportunity to share information about various projects with presenters.
- **Small Venue Pitches** (Sept 3-5, 2024) - a platform for presenters from small venues to view work suitable for their facilities. [For more info.](#)

This series intends to support artists at **various levels of their careers** from emerging, self represented artists with low fees, ranging all the way up to artists who are more expensive and represented by agents.

What is a presenter?

A presenter is either a **professional** or **volunteer-run** group/organization that brings live performing arts experiences (in dance, music, theatre, circus, puppetry etc.) into their community.

Based on their artistic vision, understanding of their community and budgetary capacity, presenters **chooses professional artists** and companies to perform in their venue.

A presenter **guarantees a fee** for a performance(s) and any additional programming (workshops, residencies) and is **responsible for contracting** the performer/company, **paying for artists' fees**, providing the **performance venue**, **technical** support, **marketing**, **hospitality**, and **selling of tickets**.

More about presenters

Presenters throughout Ontario and beyond are varied in their **organizational capacity, venue size, and audiences**. Presenting **performing art centres (PACs)** and presenting **municipal run theatres** range from small soft seat theatres with 350 or less seats to larger 1000+ seat halls.

Volunteer-run presenting organizations based in rural, remote or underserved areas often don't have access to professional theatre spaces and instead present in legion halls, small halls, school auditoriums, community centres, libraries, outdoors, heritage sites and other non-traditional spaces.

Discover more about Ontario Presents' vast touring network [here](#), or visit Ontario Presents' [Network Directory](#) for individual member profiles.

What are presenters looking for?

Information About the Presenting Sector

- High quality, professional work in a **variety of genres**.
- Engaging performances for **diverse audiences** (child, youth, families, adult).
- Projects/performance that **reflect the cultural richness of their communities**.
- Artists/companies who can be flexible and accommodate a broad **range of performance spaces, technical capabilities, and travelling** in a single tour.
- Artists/companies with **varying price points**.

How do presenters make their decisions?

Both professional and volunteer presenters make the important programming decisions either **independently**, as part of a **larger network or collective**, or as a **hybrid of both scenarios**.

Presenters working in a **network as a collective unit** work collaboratively to create viable tours, share resources, negotiate fees, and encourage high-quality live performing artists/companies to their communities.

Not every presenter wants to participate in a network, and it is completely acceptable to have **independent goals and presenting styles**. Many presenters will book some artists independently and others as part of a network, this **hybrid scenario is very common and mutually beneficial**.



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When do presenters make their decisions?

Presenters working in a network or a collective unit, often begin their decision making process in the fall in the form of **block booking calls** and other **networking opportunities**. These discussions continue into the winter months with final contracts being issued and signed throughout the process but no later than early spring.

Not all presenters follow this timeline, some may **choose a faster or slower path** to programming their season. Presenters working independently are able to book artists/companies and sign contracts at a time that is determined the relationships made between the presenter, artist/company or agent.

A host network's role in block booking

The host of a presenting network will take the responsibility of:

- **communicating** with the artists,
- **negotiating** fair fees, and
- **coordinating** tours.

For example, according to OP's 22/23 Annual Report, OP confirmed 50 tours on behalf of 21 professional presenting organizations and 11 volunteer presenters, resulting in more than \$3.9M in artist fees. This resulted in 368 performances scheduled in Ontario venues.

The tours cross many disciplines of the performing arts including contemporary dance, young audience, theatre, music and more.

Regional & national presenting networks

CAPACO defines a presenting network as a **service organization** that provides presenters with a **marketplace to do business**, and with professional development opportunities and tools. They also offer **specialized services** such as block booking, which increases the cost-efficiency of touring activities, thereby enabling presenters to deliver more benefits to more communities.

The following is a list of regional touring and presenting networks:

- [Canadian Association for the Performing Arts](#)
- [Atlantic Presenters Association](#)
- [Manitoba Arts Network](#)
- [Organization of Saskatchewan Art Councils](#)
- [Arts Touring Alliance of Alberta](#)
- [BC Touring Council](#)
- [RIDEAU - Professional Association of Show Presenters](#)



Information About the Virtual Artist Showcase

What is a virtual artist showcase?

A **Virtual Artist Showcase** is an opportunity for **performing artists** to showcase their performances online to a wide range of Ontario based venue presenters.

Each showcase will feature **short pre-recorded presentations** that span the genres of theatre, dance, music, circus, young audience and variety.

Artist selection will be made by an **independent jury**. Artists from **all regions of Canada and the US** are welcomed to apply.

Information About the Virtual Networking Series

Is applying to a artist showcase for me?

Pros to Applying to Artist Showcase

- Opportunity to have professional and volunteer presenters see your project
- Opportunity to have your project booked for an Ontario tour
- Opportunity to build new audiences and make connections
- Opportunity to promote your art form/project to a wider base

Cons to Applying to Artist Showcase

- Application does not guarantee a virtual showcase
- Selected artists for showcase are not guaranteed a tour
- Some but limited risk and some expenditure is necessary to create 5 minute pitch/showcase video
- Requires an ability and resources to self-promote

Am I ready for showcasing?

Showcase Checklist

If you can say YES to these **Checklist Criteria** consider yourself ready to apply:

- I have an understanding of my **funding/ granting options** to help me succeed.
- I have **promotional material** that supports my project such as a **video/trailer**, website, press kit.
- I have a project that is **suitable for different venues** (ie. small halls to soft-seat theatres).
- I represent a **professional organization**. Applications are welcome from outside of Canada.
- I have a project that will be of interest to and can be accommodated by **both professional and/or volunteer presenters**.

For more information on **travel grants** for touring go to [Ontario Arts Council, Touring and Circulation Grants](#).

To learn more about the importance of **self promotion and publicity** go to [ArtistProducerResource.ca](#)

To learn more about the **various presenting networks** in the Ontario Presents membership go to [ontariopresents.ca](#)

Am I ready for showcasing...continued?

If you can say YES to these **Checklist Criteria** consider yourself ready to apply:

I have a project that is **ready to tour** between the Fall 2025 and Spring of 2026.

I have a reasonable amount of **availability in my calendar** to tour my project.

I have done my **research** about touring and the different presenting networks.

I have determined my touring **costs/expenses** and can specify a fee per performance.

I have a **technical rider** that explains the technical elements of my project/performance.

For more information on **planning** for touring go to [ArtistProducerResource.ca](https://www.artistproducerresource.ca)

For more information on **budgeting** for touring go to [ArtistProducerResource.ca](https://www.artistproducerresource.ca)

To learn more about the importance of **technical riders** and to see examples go to [ArtistProducerResource.ca](https://www.artistproducerresource.ca)



How do I apply for a virtual artist showcase?

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Showcase

We encourage all interested artists/companies/representatives to review the [Guide to the Artist Showcase Application Process](#) before you begin the application form. It will provide a detail description of the process and provide additional resources to help you make the best application possible.

The [Artist Showcase Application Form](#) will be available May 1, 2024 to June 3, 2024 at 11:59 pm.

An artist/company may apply to showcase for up to 3 separate performances. Each performance must have its own application form completed.

Key dates in application process

- **Call for Applications**
 - May 1 to June 3, 2024
- **Jury Selection**
 - June 4 to end of July 2024
- **Artist Notification and Deadline for Showcase Acceptance**
 - End of July to Aug 9, 2024 at 11:59
- **Deadline for Pre-recorded Showcase Material to be Submitted**
 - Mid September 2024
- **Virtual Showcases**
 - Multi-disciplinary Showcases: October 1, 2024
 - Young Audience Showcases: October 2, 2024
 - Multi-disciplinary Showcases: October 3, 2024

What is the jury looking for?

Showcase decisions will be made by a jury committee. Committees are composed of network professionals, such as presenters, artists, agents and arts administrators. Juries evaluate submissions using the following general criteria:

- artistic excellence,
- audience impact, and
- feasibility for touring a broad range of presenters (small to large venues)

Special consideration will be given to applications from artists who identify as Indigenous, Black, or People of Colour, artists with disabilities, Deaf artists, as well as artists from the LGBTQ2S+ community, to apply, and will be placing emphasis on representation from these communities in our selection process.



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How do I make a pitch and a showcase video?

Don't worry! If you are selected for a virtual showcase you will have **more than a month to film your short pitch/showcase presentation.**

All artists selected to showcase will be **provided with helpful resources from industry experts** that will help them craft their pitch and submit their video presentation.

In the meantime, feel free to [watch the various OP Virtual Showcasing Artists from 2023](#) to give you an idea of content and expectations.

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