



INTRODUCTION

You are a Canadian performing artist or a member of a Canadian entertainment group in a creative field such as music, opera, dance or theatre, or you are a circus performer. You have just signed a contract with a U.S. employer for a single performance or a tour in the United States. Besides the travel and accommodation arrangements, you need a visa for temporary employment in the United States. So now what do you do?

This guide outlines the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (USINS or INS) visa classifications, procedures, required materials and deadlines related to individual Canadian performing artists as well as theatre, dance and musical troupes based in Canada, but not necessarily employing solely Canadians. Included in this guide are lists of INS offices, labour unions, immigration and tax lawyers and other resources. While the INS petition process is essentially the same for non-Canadian nationals as it is for Canadian nationals, there are some procedures that are unique to Canadian nationals. Where this is the case, the word "Canadian" is in **bold**.

Although the petitioner (U.S. presenter, management, immigration lawyer or other party) must be based in the United States, the Canadian artist and his/her manager should be fully aware of the INS process. It is the artist and/or his/her management that must provide the U.S. petitioner with the vast majority of the required materials and information. The key to success in dealing with the USINS is to gather all the documentation early and to anticipate problems before they arise. The INS process should commence between the artist and the U.S. petitioner during the booking process. According to research conducted by Arts Presenters in the United States, 90 percent of petitions that are returned are returned because of missing information, mistakes and miscalculations.

Although every effort has been made to provide current and accurate information in this guide, changes do occur. You are encouraged to contact the USINS, the U.S. Embassy or a U.S. consulate in Canada for up-to-date information. You may receive conflicting information, however, as many U.S. government personnel are not familiar with the performing arts in general or the specific quirks of visa classifications for performing artists.