



EYES WIDE OPEN

A practical guide to rural touring
for companies and performers

Introduction

Eyes Wide Open is a practical guide for all companies and artists wanting to tour their work to rural and community venues through one or more of the rural touring schemes that operate across England and Wales. It is intended for new and emerging companies representing mainstream and specialist work, and for established companies and artists who wish to engage with rural audiences.

It has been commissioned and distributed by the NRTF, the National Rural Touring Forum, which represents some 40+ independent touring schemes, the members of the Forum. This guide sits alongside two previous NRTF publications – the Don't Panic Pack for voluntary promoting groups, and the Scheme Managers Toolkit.

Every year more than 1800 voluntary promoting groups promote almost 4000 performances by professional companies in village halls and other community venues across England and Wales. The total annual expenditure on these events is almost £3 million and the schemes book over 900 companies a year. Almost 50% of these performances are theatre, dance, puppetry, mime or circus-based and 28% are music-based. Each year scheme managers seek out new companies, high quality small-scale productions, and exciting and enjoyable acts to include in the "menu" they offer promoters. They want to offer a broad range of work that builds new audiences and showcases new work, as well as delighting existing audiences with what they know and love.

To find out more about the NRTF and for contact details of member schemes visit www.nrtf.org.uk. If you want to keep in touch then consider becoming an Associate Member – details can be found on page 38.

Finally, our thanks go to Frankie Aitchison and Tanya Farmery, the authors of this guide, to Ralph Lister for editing in association with the board of NRTF, and to the scheme managers, artists and promoters who generously contributed their time and knowledge. We hope it encourages more companies to consider the unique and rewarding experience of rural touring.

Nicky Stainton

Chair, National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF)

Rural areas and the arts

Although touring schemes exist to improve access to the arts in rural areas, it would be a mistake to imagine the countryside as empty of artistic opportunities. There are many artists, professional and amateur, living and working in rural areas, as well as arts organisations, touring theatre companies, and local authority arts officers. The arts also thrive in festivals, historic buildings and commercial enterprises.

Touring schemes have a distinctive place within this rural arts ecosystem, not least because of their valuable partnerships with local promoters. There is a growth in rural arts activity, particularly in the kind of self-directed initiatives that link communities with professional artists. Rural touring is part of this development, which is often intended to strengthen a sense of community. Every promoter, like every community, is different.

For that reason, performing in rural areas is exciting and unpredictable. Many artists find their work and assumptions challenged. No two performances will be alike. Working in village halls demands commitment and openness. It can offer a closeness that sometimes eludes in larger venues. It is real and puts the connection between artist and audience at the heart of the experience – where it belongs.

François Matarasso

Adapted from Only Connect: Arts Touring and Rural Communities a research study published in 2004 and available through NRTF.



"It's fantastic, I love it. It's a great way of getting your stuff to a totally different audience; you get to see the country and get to see people who want to meet you!"

Robert Rickenberg, Sheena Davies Group

"We had a South African company and discovered that the stage at one venue wasn't going to be big enough but that there wasn't enough space in the hall to put the company on the floor either... The promoter rang us the next day – they had built a 6ft extension to the stage, just for this event. The effort they went to!"

Sarah Peterkin, Take Art

"There was one promoter who owned a chocolate factory and the hospitality was great, chocolate desert and large boxes of chocolate..."

Jenny Roberts, OTTC

"It was a wonderful sight to see a group of farmers questioning the puppeteers over a pint after their Christmas performance at our hall."

Promoter, Durham

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Eastern Angles - A Dulditch Angel - Photo by Mike Kwasniak



State of Emergency – Louise Katerega and Joanne Moven - Photo by Piers Rawson

Chapter 1 WHAT IS RURAL TOURING?

"I firmly believe that rural touring has become the yardstick for conventional venues. If I can get the feeling in a conventional venue that I get from a village hall then I know I've won."

Hank Wangford, Musician

“Rural touring is principally about offering a whole range of venues – both rural and semi-rural – the opportunity to access a range of live performing arts. It’s exceptional, exciting, often a unique experience and it’s professional – rural touring is not the poor relation of work seen in other dedicated arts venues. It’s about communities being able to meet and socialise in their own space and it’s imperative that it’s a quality artistic experience that reaches as many people in the community as possible of all ages, backgrounds, and tastes. Professional live arts on your doorstep! If young performers enjoy rural touring, it will give them experience for life. What’s more they may return to it as mature performers because it’s so brilliant. Many do.” Sue Roberts, Artservice

The NRTF

The National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF) is the membership-led umbrella organisation for rural touring schemes in England and Wales and acts as an advisor and researcher on issues and best practice. Its members take it in turns to organise an annual conference where scheme staff, promoters, and rural touring artists get together to share ideas. Artists who have worked successfully with one NRTF member scheme will often be picked up by other schemes; word of mouth through the NRTF network is an effective marketing tool for successful rural touring artists. The NRTF website (www.nrtf.org.uk) holds information that may be of use including a searchable database with touring scheme contact details, a companies and performers database, where you can register details about your show, and The Touring Scheme Toolkit that has further information about how schemes work. Associate Membership details are described on page 38.

Rural Touring Is...

- touring of professional performances and exhibitions, across all artforms, to rural, semi-rural and some urban areas and into community venues such as churches, village halls, and local schools
- touring schemes sourcing artists and producing a menu that they distribute amongst their army of village promoters
- volunteer promoters choosing shows, marketing them and hosting the performance
- a chance for artists to work in a variety of venues and connect with a different type of audience than offered by the small scale touring circuit. (In 2004/2005 265,000 people attended 3,855 shows performed by 962 companies across England and Wales.)
- the joy, magic and idiosyncracies associated with rural touring make it a unique and memorable experience
- ...not the poor relation of work seen in dedicated arts venues...

“Rural Touring is about bringing professional arts into isolated communities, whether it’s rural or not. Often people don’t have easy access to venues and don’t necessarily consider themselves arts attenders. They go to events out of curiosity, to support the local community, and they really like to see life in the place they live.” Dawn Badland, Applause

How Rural Touring Works

Across England and Wales there are approximately 40 Rural Touring schemes. Each has developed a brand identity associated with finding and providing quality professional performances.

Each year these schemes collate menu(s) of live arts shows for a touring season based on their programming policy, e.g. quotas for art forms and local demand. Some schemes have one season, running from autumn to spring; others have two, running autumn to winter and then spring to early summer and so produce two menus a year.

A menu is a filtered choice of artists and companies, selected by the scheme staff, reflecting a variety of artforms, a range of work (familiar through to more challenging) at different price levels (see Chapter 4 for more information).

Menus are sent to the schemes’ network of promoters – usually volunteers such as a village hall committee. Depending on the size of their scheme and the subsidies available, promoters choose one or more shows for each season to suit their community.

Schemes will request your available dates before you can go into their menu – however many will only pencil in those dates; this is because schemes are unlikely to know in advance how many promoters will want to book you.

How quickly they can confirm bookings depends on the deadline they set for their promoters to return request booking forms. Schemes set a date by which promoters must submit their requests – and will confirm bookings with you as soon as they’ve scheduled the forthcoming season. It’s important you hold the dates you have offered. Please remember that although a scheme may like you and has put you in the menu you may still not get any bookings. The final decision is down to what the promoters want for their communities.

The information flow is described in more detail in Chapter 3.

Points to consider:

- Friday and Saturday nights are very popular nights with promoters and it can be more difficult for schemes to place bookings on week nights
- Be upfront with schemes if you need to negotiate about any of the pencilled dates you have agreed with them
- Be as flexible as possible and keep the scheme up to date with your availability

Prospective companies and artists should know that each scheme is different; no two promoters are the same and no two venues are the same.

Promoters

Promoters are important. They are unpaid volunteers who choose to work with a touring scheme and take on the responsibility of selecting shows, marketing them, and hosting the night. Touring schemes work closely with their promoters developing strong relationships and assisting them to bring their local community together. Please remember this.

A promoter who's at the heart of their community will be a great advocate for the work you do so make friends with them. Promoters across a touring scheme share stories about shows and performers that could also be useful to you.

Promoters can be individuals or village hall committees or school PTAs but they are almost always volunteers. They are not paid by the rural touring schemes for putting on a show – they do it because they want to bring high quality performances to their community.

Touring promoters are not professional arts staff. They may not know about your excellent reputation, they may know nothing about your technical set up, and they may never have put on a show before – so tell them what you need but be gentle!

In choosing a show and promoting it to their community the promoters are taking a risk. From a financial viewpoint they are required to sell enough tickets to raise the minimum fee levied by the scheme for the show. They are also taking a personal risk. In some ways the greater risk is that if the show does not go down well they still have to face the community long after the performers have gone.

Venues and Audiences

The promoters' venues range from 1920s wooden huts with one power point, to churches with outside toilets, to all singing all dancing brand new buildings with lighting rigs and tea bars. Most, however, are unequipped without even a CD player. There can be access issues and not all will have facilities such as a hearing loop system.

Audiences are as varied as the venues they congregate in. It is not uncommon for grandparents and grandchildren to be in the same audience whether it's a jazz band or a puppet show. A community event can attract all members of the community, whatever their age or profession. Typically 58% of rural touring audiences live within five miles of the venue.

The hall, whatever state it is in, is effectively the heart of the community. You are being invited into the "front room" of an extended or very diverse family. A big part of your job is turning this room into a professional performance space. (For more information on venues and promoters see Chapters 4, 5, & 6).

The Difference Between Schemes

Schemes might be independent – run by one person working from home or by four or five staff based in an office; others are run by local authority officers. The number of supported shows might range from 6 to over 60 in one autumn (October to December) season and some schemes are not exclusively rural – Black Country Touring covers the urban districts of Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, and Walsall.

Many schemes receive funding from the Arts Council of England and local authorities and offer financial support to local promoters so they will only pay a proportion of the show price (often a minimum fee as referenced above). Schemes advise on or set ticket prices; these vary and average between £3.50 and £8.

All schemes take the job of understanding and catering for their communities seriously and have developed expertise in knowing what shows their communities want to see. They also have an appetite for finding new work (see Chapter 3 for more detail).

Chapter One Summary

- rural touring is a partnership between the knowledge and commitment of local people and the expertise of schemes and artists to bring high quality arts to rural and community venues
- the NRTF is the umbrella organisation for schemes in England and Wales (membership is optional)
- the schemes are co-ordinated by professionals but the shows are chosen, promoted and hosted by unpaid local volunteers
- venues are usually unequipped and challenging performance spaces but are familiar, welcoming spaces for the local community – providing uniquely creative opportunities for artists
- most of your audience will live within five miles of the venue and the outcome of your performance, for better or worse, will resonate with the local community
- rural touring provides extensive performance opportunities across the UK for companies to connect with new audiences.



Blaize Theatre - Loading the Van - Photo by Catherine Caton

Chapter 2

ARE WE COMPATIBLE?

*"Think about what you want to achieve and why.
Is rural touring really for you?"*

Michelle Whittick, Hijinx Theatre



➤ *Dance East - Bare Bones Firebird - Photo by Johan Persson*

Suitability for rural touring is about quality and flexibility. You will have an excellent product, a professional approach, sound communication skills, a flexible attitude – and a sense of humour. It's not glamorous. You won't always have a dressing room and with some touring schemes you may be offered overnight accommodation in the spare rooms of the volunteers.

Rural touring involves travel to out-of-the-way places and liaison with volunteer promoters who may have little experience of hosting a show and may have limited knowledge of your excellent reputation. Above all it entails being friendly to a set of complete strangers every single night. Still interested?

Things to Consider

- why do you want to do rural touring?
- do you have a suitable, high quality, professional product?
- have you visited a rural touring venue to see how it works?
- are you familiar with the profile of rural touring audiences?
- does everyone involved with the show believe in the ethos of rural touring?
- do you have the capacity to work in rural touring – in terms of marketing materials, professionalism, and good administration? (see Appendix 1 sample of a programming policy)
- are you technically adaptable and self-contained?
- is your set flexible for a variety of spaces?
- if you are a dance company do you have a portable floor and/or raised staging?
- have you thought about sight lines?
- do you have relevant insurance, work permits, and CRB disclosure checks? You will need to be familiar with legislation affecting village hall venues. (see Appendix 2 for further information)

Rural touring requires commitment and the ability to communicate with not only the professionals that coordinate the schemes but also with a wide variety of volunteers. Promoters will need and appreciate your support in the lead up to, and on the night. Your clear guidance on technical issues and help with marketing will mean you will all have the best night possible.

What Works?

Sue Roberts, who runs Artservice, sums it up like this: *"We're looking for exciting, exceptional work – something different but with a strong emphasis on quality assurance. If a theatre company, for example, doesn't tour a rostra or a set, or believes that it doesn't need theatre lighting (however crude and however limited), then this may reveal a level of*

inexperience or possibly even a careless attitude to touring non-theatre venues. It may also tell us that they just haven't understood the need to make a non-theatre venue become a magical place. Understanding, and a genuine commitment to the ethos of rural touring, is often more important – or as important – as having previous experience in working rural venues. However, the product is critical – it has to be top quality and appropriate because venues recognise quality and they deserve it."

What Does Not Work?

Schemes' experience, understanding, and knowledge of their volunteers allow them to select a menu of shows that has variety and broad appeal. It is important to remember, however, that even if you are in a scheme menu it is the promoters that choose the shows and in the end they will only promote a show they feel is suitable for their community. All promoters are different and audiences are cross-generational so an imaginative and unusual style of show may go down well in one village but may be too challenging for another.

Musicians who do not communicate with the audience, dance that is too obscure, theatre that pushes a political theme hard may not be suitable. That is not to say that shows can't challenge, but consider who the show is for.

Sometimes it isn't just the content and style of shows that can be unsuitable. The sheer size of sets or performing area may mean they don't fit into some halls or will dramatically reduce the potential seats a promoter can sell.

If you don't have a genuine interest in rural touring and you are not willing to work closely with promoters you're probably not going to be suitable. When considering your suitability, you have to persuade, in the first instance, the scheme managers that you're right for rural touring. In turn they have to convince promoters to book your show after which they have to cajole audiences to come and see you. So it all starts with you – your communications skills, critically the show itself and your quality back up material and administration.

Chapter Two Summary

Successful rural touring artists are flexible, equipped, and understand the terrain. Before going any further you need to be sure you:

- understand what works in rural touring and what doesn't
- are approaching it with the right attitude and a professional product
- are flexible, down to earth, and able to muck in with non-professional promoters at modestly equipped venues.

GETTING NOTICED

"Build a relationship of trust with the people that run the schemes because they know their constituency; there's no point going onto the touring circuit if your material is going to go down like a lead balloon. Start out by getting the schemes to come and see your work – then talk to them. They'll know if it will go down well." **Guy Hutchins, Moby Duck**

Theatre of Widdershins - Three Billy Goats Gruff - Photo by Penny Earey



So, you've decided that you still want to do rural touring...

Where to Start?

If you wish to take the initiative think of the following actions:

- go to the NRTF website for a comprehensive list of NRTF members and contact details
- ask colleagues if they have background knowledge of the circuit
- contact your local authority arts officer or Arts Council Regional Office for information they might carry about rural touring
- make contact with the scheme in your area, see if there is information they can send you about their programme
- post your company's details on the NRTF website
- send information about your company to your nearest touring scheme including quotes and references if you have them plus forthcoming gigs lists if you are touring in their vicinity (the remainder of the chapter gives more a more comprehensive list of what to send).

Touring schemes are always looking for new work – at arts centres, professional venues, festivals such as Edinburgh and Brighton. They talk to Arts Council officers, local authorities and also exchange information with other touring schemes about up and coming companies and performers.

Approaching Schemes

Most schemes prefer printed information. (See the sample of a company enquiry form in Appendix 3 and sample of a menu extract in Appendix 4).

Make sure the information you send is professional and concise. Furthermore, your information pack may well be sent to promoters so it has to be accurate on company requirements and needs. Large sets and performing areas, for example, will inhibit your chance of being selected by a scheme to go into their menu. Companies yet to design their set or finalise production details need to establish parameters for the production space at the outset and then update schemes with production information as soon as possible.

There are other routes in to rural touring; some schemes commission work or support emerging companies through a mentoring relationship. Each scheme operates differently and it is important to get to know them and discuss the options available to you.

The Rural Touring Network in Cheshire embarked on a mentoring project with Boojum, a theatre company producing new writing.

“The aim of the mentoring scheme was to address the ‘Catch 22’ that exists – where new companies aren’t booked because their work hasn’t been tried and tested on a rural touring circuit,” says Claire Smith, Rural Arts Officer, Cheshire County Council. “We wanted to make the process of

approaching schemes more transparent. We wanted to raise awareness within emerging theatre networks that this circuit existed and it could be a really creative place to develop new work.”

The scheme worked with PANDA, The Performing Arts Network and Development Agency, serving Manchester and the North West, to raise the profile and understanding of rural touring. Boojum Theatre was selected and embarked on a year-long mentoring project meeting rural touring promoters, venues, and shows and receiving training in rural touring including marketing, pricing, designing for small spaces, technical considerations, artistic content, and liaising with promoters.

“The mentoring was a luxury, it allowed us to gradually get to know the scheme and gave us an entry to other schemes,” says Chris Bridgman, from Boojum Theatre. “At an annual promoters’ day we did a sample of the piece and this was great in terms of showcasing. It gave promoters a sense of what we were offering. One of the main things I learned is that you need to use slightly different language in rural touring. In a theatre you might be selling innovation, in a rural touring venue you have to make it feel a bit more familiar.”

The above example is one bespoke way in which one touring scheme aimed to support an emerging company. What it illustrates is the commitment schemes have to supporting artists often in financially straitened circumstances and usually arises as a result of a burgeoning relationship between a scheme and young company.

What To Send?

- an introductory letter
- a concise information pack with all relevant information.

Your Introductory Letter

Make it brief and answer these points clearly:

- who are you and what do you do?
- why should the scheme put you in the menu?
- why would a promoter book you?
- why should a rural touring audience come and see you?

Your Information Pack

Before you post your Pack – **STOP!**

Consider including the following information:

- accurate synopsis/description including title of the show
- dates available – Schemes pencil in dates with you before you go in the menu. Because of the time promoters take to choose acts and dates, there can be a long gap between the dates you offered to a scheme and their confirmation of dates. For an autumn season tour, for example, it may be as late as July before your offered dates are confirmed. Some schemes are proactive and when they have taken dates from you will work to fill them. **However in many cases not all the dates you offer will be taken.**

*Theatre of Widdershins - The King's got Donkey's Ears! -
Photo by Penny Earey*

- fee (be clear about what this includes i.e. travel, accommodation and publicity amounts) – can you offer a reduction for multiple dates? Are you VAT registered? (some schemes are not VAT registered and cannot reclaim VAT)
- contact information
- website address
- suitability – what is the show's target audience (including age and appropriateness of language)? It will make the life of volunteer ticket sellers much easier
- references e.g. from venues and other scheme managers
- CVs – including history of the company and touring experience
- press and audience quotes
- examples of print and other marketing material especially a picture or graphic image – good quality video, DVD, or CD if relevant
- clear and accurate technical information detailing your minimum requirements is important. What is your absolute minimum performance area (including width, depth, and HEIGHT – some village halls have low ceilings or roof beams)? Do you tour with lights, amplification, stage, and set? Do you travel with a portable induction loop? How many 13-amp points do you need? Do you perform on the floor and how will you minimize sight line problems for the audience?
- number of performers (and stage managers) on tour
- special requirements – dietary or otherwise
- get in and out times
- details on where schemes can see your current show, invitations / free tickets
- information on accompanying workshops – If you have integral workshops then include cost, length, scope and suitable age range. Providing workshops will not secure your place on the menu over offered work that does not. Most schemes do not offer financial support for workshops so promoters have to take on the fee and organisation themselves. However, workshops offer promoters a great way to market shows and provide an exciting way to encourage audience and community development
- make schemes aware that you have public liability insurance, an H&S policy, CRB disclosure checks if appropriate, and is your equipment PAT tested? Schemes and/or promoters will need to see your public liability, H&S policy and know you have carried out relevant risk assessments on your show, proof that your equipment is PAT tested, and CRB disclosure checks if appropriate.

When To Send Information

Most promoters book shows via touring schemes rather than directly with the artists therefore the booking process isn't as quick and straight forward as with art centres. Most schemes filter through marketing packs as they arrive. Those that are poorly presented or offer inappropriate content are put to one side immediately. The rest are filed until it's time to begin putting the menu together for the next season.





The optimum time for sending in your marketing pack is a year before the relevant season or just before scheme staff begin the sifting process for that season. Here are some examples with submission times in green – please check details with each scheme.

Autumn Season Programming*

SEPTEMBER 00:

Autumn season begins

JANUARY 01:

Schemes begin sifting through potential acts and then draw up new menu

FEBRUARY 01:

Schemes make final decisions on content

MARCH 01:

Menus sent to promoters

MAY 01:

Promoters return booking forms

JUNE & JULY 01:

Schemes confirm bookings with artists

SEPTEMBER 01:

Autumn season begins

Spring Season Programming*

MARCH 01:

Spring season begins

MAY 01:

Schemes begin sifting through potential acts and draw up new menu

JUNE 01:

Schemes make final decisions on content

JULY 01:

Menus sent to promoters

SEPTEMBER 01:

Promoters return booking forms

DECEMBER 01:

Schemes confirm bookings with artists

MARCH 02:

Spring season begins

* For schemes running a single season, from September – April/May, follow the autumn season above. If you don't know your local scheme's programming pattern, phone and ask.

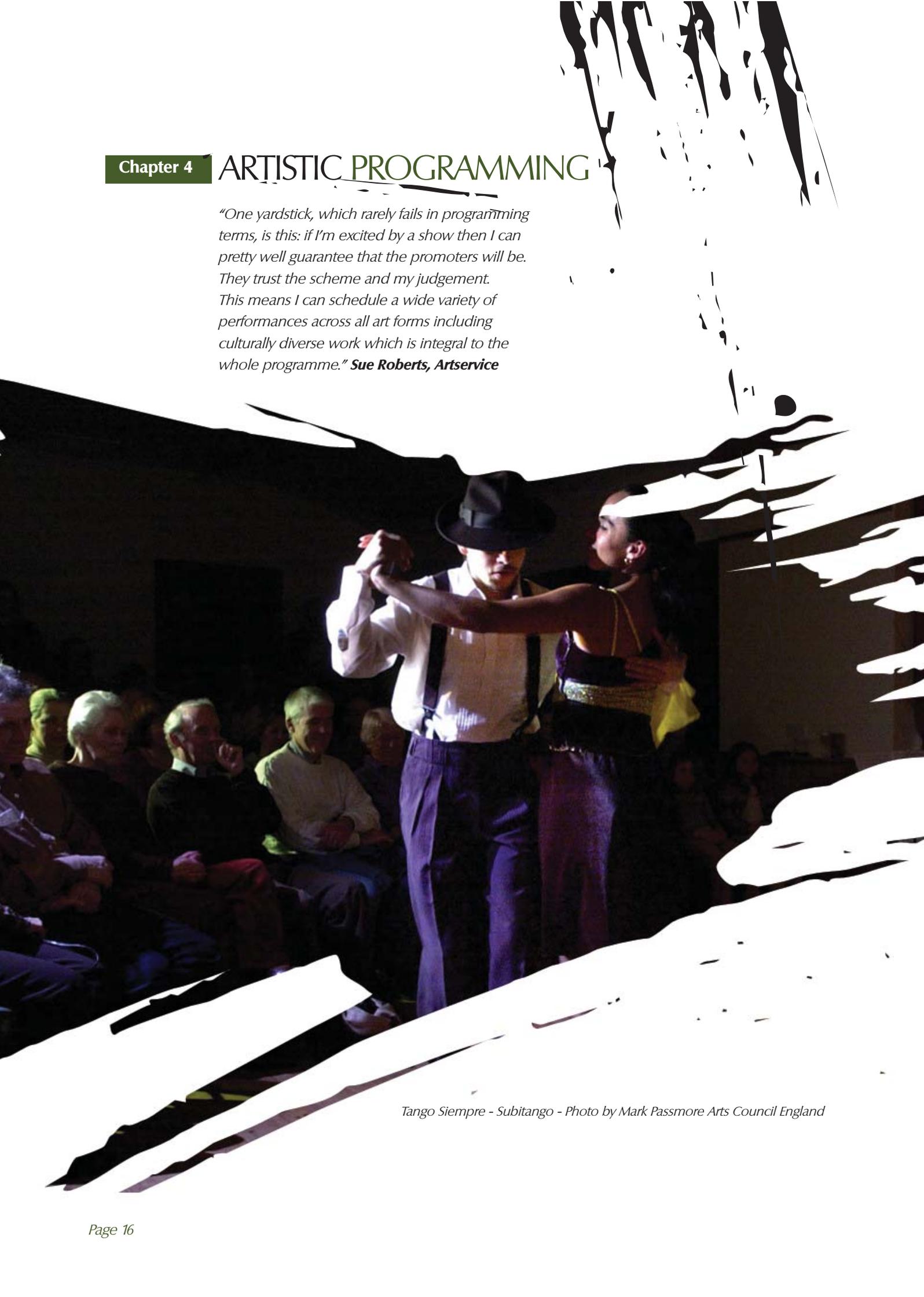
Chapter Three Summary

To get short-listed for a rural touring scheme menu you have to have an excellent product AND stand out from the crowd. Competition is fierce.

- contact relevant schemes (see the NRTF website www.nrtf.org.uk)
- develop a relationship with them
- send your appropriate information at optimum times
- keep in touch with scheme coordinators about any changes to your show, technical requirements, and marketing materials.

ARTISTIC PROGRAMMING

“One yardstick, which rarely fails in programming terms, is this: if I’m excited by a show then I can pretty well guarantee that the promoters will be. They trust the scheme and my judgement. This means I can schedule a wide variety of performances across all art forms including culturally diverse work which is integral to the whole programme.” **Sue Roberts, Artservice**



Tango Siempre - Subitango - Photo by Mark Passmore Arts Council England

When it comes to programming and choosing what should go in the menu most schemes set out to provide:

- a range of art forms
- a broad artistic programme reflecting local, national, international, and diverse work
- a mix of scale
- a balance of cost of shows
- a programme which will appeal to a variety of different audiences e.g. established theatre companies as well as emerging dance and music groups.

In seeking to fulfil these criteria, touring schemes regularly visit festivals in the UK (e.g. Edinburgh, Decibel, Brighton) and abroad and listen to recommendations from their promoters. Some schemes are active producers, working with companies or other agencies to commission productions to satisfy their programming policies. Staff from different schemes regularly talk to each other about companies and productions and the annual NRTF conference aims to showcase work from within the region that the host member scheme is based.

Scheme Criteria

The challenge for schemes is to offer promoters the best quality they can find. This means finding work that is inventive, succeeds well within the particular confines of a village hall set up (which itself sets challenges to companies), is presented to a high professional standard (which does not necessarily equate to expensive production values), is appropriate to the audience it is playing to, and carries the approval of a funding body such as a local authority or Arts Council (though this is not necessarily a pre-requisite).

The NRTF does not impose a quality threshold on individual member schemes. Nor does it pass down an artistic programming policy which members have to abide by. It does, however, encourage members to adopt an artistic programming policy and through its 'Go & See' grant programme offers financial support to scheme staff to attend festivals to see new work. Similarly the NRTF can only advise members on issues relating to diversity and equal opportunities – members are independent organisations reporting to their governing boards or local authority committees.

Some schemes will offer familiar work, others may offer work that is more challenging. Placing diverse work in the menu is important to rural touring schemes to ensure that they offer a balanced programme. Schemes receive information from hundreds of companies and artists and the shows offered in the menu are selected in the belief that they will appeal to a wide range of promoters and audiences.

Schemes usually have an artistic programming policy (see Appendix 1 for sample of a programming policy). When schemes are sifting through marketing material they are looking for:

- quality
- suitability
- diversity
- availability
- size/scale
- price
- publicity & marketing material
- companies that understand the nature of rural touring
- evidence of good administration
- audience demand.

Because schemes are programming across a wide spectrum of rural communities they are looking for shows that will appeal to a variety of sensibilities. Smaller touring schemes, which offer only six shows per menu, may not take a risk programming something more challenging. However larger schemes, and those with long-standing promoters, are always looking for something new and challenging to tempt promoters to push the boundaries. The location of a scheme also has a bearing on the flavour of its menu. Black Country Touring, based in the West Midlands, offers a wide range of culturally diverse work because it's locally available.

Scheme staff work closely with local promoters and will invest great care in matching work with communities. When you are creating work, think about your audience and the environment you are going into. Remember your expectation of village life may be very different to the reality so talk to your scheme.

"We wouldn't not programme anything political or avant garde – but we would be very clear about it in the menu and I wouldn't programme anything that was strongly political or controversial without seeing it first. We've had full frontal nudity before – although it was done in a humorous way. We made sure promoters knew this before they booked it and they were all fine with it." **Sarah Peterkin, Take Art**

Why Promoters Choose You

Menus are sent out to promoters who choose a number of shows over the course of a season or year. Promoters are not professional arts centre programmers; they are often local groups, such as village hall committees, who are looking for a show that will work well in their community. Sometimes promoters work as part of a larger group – the village hall committee, a church, or school group. Others work on their own or with one or two others in their village but they will almost always have the backing of a relevant group i.e. the village hall committee, school, parish council etc. Many will work with the staff from the local scheme, whose opinion they value. There is a sense of great anticipation that awaits the launch of a new season's menu and even very experienced promoters seek help in identifying good work.

Remember – it is the local promoters who choose the show and even if you make it to the menu your show may not get booked.

Checklist For Artists

Competition for inclusion on a rural touring menu is fierce. To help you along make sure you are familiar with a scheme's artistic programming policy:

- have you discussed the show's content and technical requirement with the scheme and taken their advice?
- if the show's content or language is challenging or controversial have you taken steps to ensure that it will still be acceptable in the intimacy of a village hall setting e.g.

through workshops or appropriate marketing indicating the target audience and appropriate age range?

- have you reiterated the quality of your product through quotes, references, or recommendations?
- have you invited schemes and their promoters to your work elsewhere?
- have you provided examples of your high quality marketing support/materials?

Equal Opportunities

The NRTF is committed to the principle that there should be genuine equality of opportunity for all sections of the population in the practice, appreciation, and enjoyment of the arts. To this end a policy of equal opportunities informs and guides all aspects of the organisation's work.

The NRTF wishes to secure genuine equality of opportunity throughout its work and in the provision of its services, in its responsibilities as an employer, and in its own management structure. The NRTF recognises and values the rich cultural diversity that exists in contemporary British society and will encourage and assist any disadvantaged group to achieve a position from which equality of opportunity can operate. Its services, policies and procedures are designed not to discriminate either directly or indirectly against any group or individual. This policy will take cognisance of diversity legislation including The Race Relations Act 1976, The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2003.

The NRTF has developed a Diversity Action Plan which is reviewed on an annual basis.

Chapter Four Summary

Rural touring schemes use their experience and artistic programming policy to decide which shows are offered on their programme. Local promoters will subsequently make their choices based on their knowledge of their local audience. The keys to getting booked are:

- understanding rural touring audiences and venues
- providing a high quality product
- understanding that the 'product' includes, marketing, administration and technical support as well as the show
- building relationships with schemes.

Hijinx Theatre - Estella's Fire - Photo by Brian Tarr



You have a booking – so what is next?

Your Booking Is Confirmed

In due course schemes will confirm bookings with you. The booking process can be very fluid so it is advisable that you stay in touch with schemes during this period.

Your accommodation and travel requirements should have been discussed when you were selected to be in the menu. This, however, is a good time to confirm these requirements. (for further information on hospitality see Chapter 7)

Remember to update schemes regularly about changes in technical details, marketing support, travel and accommodation needs, and especially show content or change of title of show, for companies whose shows were still in development when they are selected.

Payment

Payment works differently across the schemes. In most instances the scheme pays you the agreed fee two to four weeks after the performance on receipt of an invoice. With other schemes you will be paid in part by the promoter (sometimes on the night) and the remainder by cheque from the local authority. This information should form part of your contract or accompanying information.

What Schemes Expect From You

Marketing

Remember your reputation may not be known, and you will be targeting new audiences who may have to be persuaded to try it. Strong marketing is the key to tempt them there and in rural touring that takes a joint effort between you, the touring scheme who has recruited you – and the promoters who booked you.

Publicity Bugbears:

- poor quality publicity says poor quality show
- marketing materials must tell audiences why they should attend the show
- make sure your posters and fliers can be photocopied and leave enough space for overprinting – IT'S IMPORTANT! Use both sides of a flier with a description of the show along with press one liners on the back and a good, sharp picture or graphic image for inclusion in the menu, listings,

brochures and press releases (make all pictures, posters and leaflets the best you can afford)

- a set number of A5 leaflets and A4 and A3 posters which will either be sent to the scheme or directly to the promoters – check scheme requirements. Leaflets and posters often need to go through the photocopier for overprinting so do not make them too thick or coated. Alternatively win brownie points with your scheme and do the overprinting for them!
- press release information
- proof of all insurance, PAT tests, H&S, CRB disclosure checks as appropriate.

What You May Get From A Scheme

- contracts are sent approximately two months in advance of the show although schemes vary. Some schemes send one contract to cover all of your bookings in their area, while others send individual contracts for each show. Remember to check all the details carefully and send them back asap. (See Appendix 5 sample of a performer responsibility contract)
- information pack
- venue technical specification. (If not included contact promoters promptly and discuss)
- promoter's contact information
- venue access information
- maps
- accommodation if agreed or contacts for bed & breakfast accommodation.

Chapter Five Summary

Schemes confirm your bookings with you. Contracts and information are then sent out in due course.

- the supply of marketing materials starts well before show night
- you will be asked to provide a specified number of fliers and posters – either to the scheme or directly to the promoters
- make sure the information is accurate and that the image is eye-catching and appropriate
- remember all schemes and promoters are different. Talk to the scheme manager right from the start and plan your marketing carefully
- don't skimp on the publicity you provide – it works and could make the difference between an audience of 20 or 120!



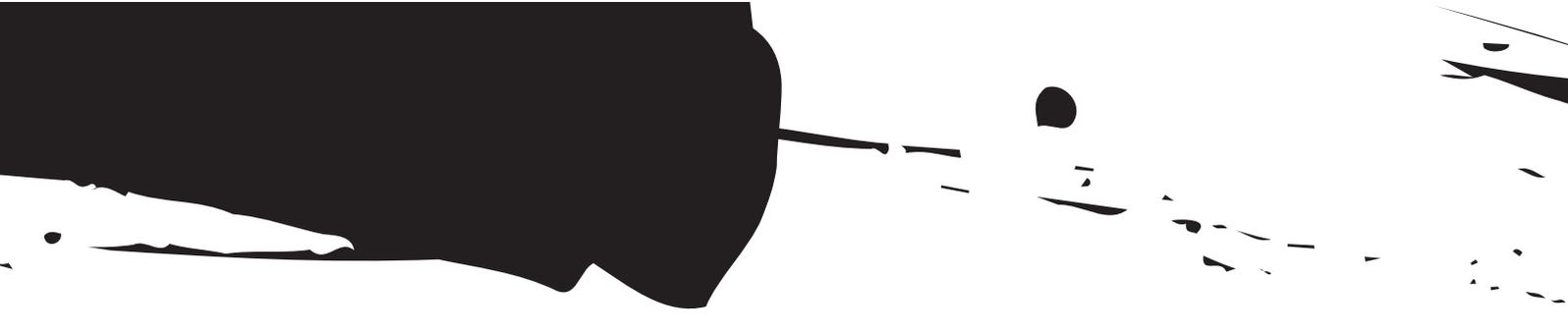
"It may seem to be easy to go to a village hall and have a sell out because the audience lives two doors away; it isn't. Promoters often have to work hard to persuade their community it's worth coming along – and companies have to work hard to prove them right!"

John Laidlaw, Live & Local



Northumberland Touring Theatre Co - Tartuffe - Photo by Keith Pattison copyright NTC

Chapter 6 IT'S SHOWTIME!



"It's as much a social occasion as an artistic one therefore the interval is very important, be prepared to give them that. You may have an hour get out and a three hour drive but it comes down to why they do it – it's their evening out."

Graham Langley, *Storytelling Café*

"If you're at a big theatre or arts centre your show will be just a part of the programme; with rural touring your work will become a memorable event for the whole community. It is a brilliant experience! Go for it!!"

Todor Nikolov of *Waggish Radish Puppet Theatre*

So, it's show time!

This is the culmination of all that planning and preparation. For some villages the community may only come together a few times each year so this is a special event. It's not uncommon for audiences to talk about THE rural touring event for months.

Make sure it goes with a swing by following these guidelines on preparation and planning.

Checklist Before The Night

- call the promoter to introduce yourselves and confirm your requirements. Most schemes will ask you to ring about 10 days before the show – even if you've previously been in touch to arrange marketing information
- find out how ticket sales are going so you are prepared
- get a good description of the hall and a plan if necessary
- double-check technical info – 13-amp sockets, lighting, black-outs, stage, dance floor, CD players and sight lines. Make sure that your set will fit
- plan, design, and pack whatever you need to turn a village hall into a performance space
- some shows include a sit down supper during the interval. Confirm start and finish times now, including any lengthy intervals, because it will affect your finish time
- check your hospitality arrangements especially if it is important to you. Food and accommodation needs should have been arranged well in advance
- remember some villages don't have shops or 24hr petrol stations so you may need to pack food and fill up before you arrive

- plan your route and include plenty of time for traffic and rural travel – you might get stuck behind a herd of cows or slow travelling car towing a caravan
- village halls can be cold so be prepared, especially if it is important to you. Dancers for example may need to pack warm clothes.

Checklist On The Night

- turn up at the agreed time so you're not keeping promoters waiting or making them anxious. Some schemes insist that you arrive at the venue at least 1.5 to 2 hours before your performance, even if you have no set to erect and your get in time is short
- be open minded
- be friendly and polite
- talk to the promoter about your set up. Remember – they may NEVER have had a show before and may be nervous! Discuss sight lines, start time, show length, interval time and length, raffle (if there is one), how you'd like to be introduced, have the lights faded etc
- do a risk assessment
- be prepared to improvise
- be sociable. You are ambassadors for the touring scheme and have been invited into someone's community – it is not your space, it's theirs
- be prepared for anything even after the show begins!
- be ready on time
- don't be thrown by the impact of unexpected local events such as a wedding or a significant birthday in the village
- And remember have a GREAT SHOW!!

Chapter Six Summary

- from about 10 days before a show you will need to liaise with the promoters
- remember they are not professional promoters and the venues may have limited equipment
- be very clear about technical details. If in doubt – check
- make sure you all understand start times, intervals etc
- pack food and warm clothes
- develop a relationship with both the promoters and the community if you can
- and be punctual, friendly and polite at all times.

HOSPITALITY

"There was one promoter who owned a chocolate factory and the hospitality was great, chocolate dessert, large boxes of chocolates..."

Jenny Roberts, OTTC (Oxfordshire Touring Theatre Company)



Rasa Productions - Curry Tales - Photo by Matt Squire

Hospitality on the rural touring circuit varies from village to village. So planning ahead regarding food and overnight stays is essential.

In Advance

Discuss your needs with the scheme coordinators when you are put into the scheme's menu. Schemes vary as to what they expect local promoters to provide for you so when you are booked you should confirm what you need, what can be provided, and what you will need to arrange yourselves. If you have specific requirements like diet or disability access these should be arranged well in advance. It is a good idea to speak to the promoter a few days before you arrive to ensure everything is in place e.g. if promoters are able to provide food agree if that will be before or after the show, or during the interval.

- remember that whether it's a local B&B or hospitality near the venue you need to phone in advance to arrange keys and a time of arrival that suits them – especially if you would like to arrive early or you're likely to have a late get out
- if you're staying in someone's home don't change your mind at the last minute. They may have gone out of their way to fit you in, sent the kids off to the grandparents for the night, and put the dog in kennels
- be absolutely clear about what you need when staying with promoters whether it's access, privacy or cultural requirements but always be polite.

On Arrival

Promoters are volunteers, they have already put in hours of their time booking the show, marketing it, and getting the hall ready – and they may be taking a financial risk. Some of them also work full-time and have a family to look after. Receiving a cup of tea and sandwiches or a baked potato should be seen as a welcome treat.

Whatever you're offered please be appreciative and remember having a meal with promoters is a lovely way to get to know them and can make the rest of the evening relaxed and enjoyable.

After The Show

It's time to pack up but you won't be able to run away that easily. It's important to remember that this is the end of a great night that these volunteers have been planning for months. Your audience will want to talk to you, have a look at your set, and tell you what they thought! The committee will be stacking the chairs, sweeping up, and tackling the mound of cups and saucers in the kitchen – or may want to help you too. At some venues, you may have food after the show.

Staying Overnight

Accommodation on the rural touring circuit ranges from B&Bs and self-catering, to sleeping in the spare room at the promoter's house. For groups of performers it can be a logistical problem accommodating everyone under one roof

and you may find you are split up. If your accommodation needs are important or you have specific requirements talk to your scheme.

You will have discussed accommodation issues with the schemes way back when you first talked about bookings. Many schemes are trying to phase out arranging accommodation for artists because it takes up so much time. For many promoters arranging beds for the night is an added complication. If you do arrange your own accommodation agree with the scheme whether or not any additional cost is included in your overall fee. For artists accepting free overnight accommodation in the village, you need to be aware that it can be a very social event!

"You are going into someone's house to sleep and because they are not jaded, as a rule, you are treated with excitement especially if the show was held well. It's a social thing and it has to be a social for you as well."

Robert Rickenberg, Sheena Davis Group

"We have stopped taking promoters' hospitality because, although it's a much appreciated offer, on a 60-day tour the actors barely want to speak to each other let alone be taken home, given a meal, and stay up talking all night."

Jenny Roberts, OTTC

"We had a Flamenco show which was absolutely superb. We'd done a cabaret style evening with tapas and Spanish wines. The group was staying with us and it turned out it was one of the girl's birthday so we had a party back at our house and they sang and played for us until four in the morning – it was fantastic. Then in the following February we went to visit them in Seville." **Promoter, Lincolnshire**

Chapter Seven Summary

It's important to remember that sorting out your food and accommodation on the road is part and parcel of working in rural touring. The offer of a meal and a bed for the night should be seen as a bonus – not a right.

- be clear about hospitality and accommodation requirements up front with the scheme coordinators
- ask promoters whether they are able to feed you – be prepared to buy your own food
- after the show, remember to talk to the audience and the promoters about the event. They will talk to other venues about you so create a good reputation
- if you're staying with promoters, be prepared for a social night!
- prepare all the actors/performers working for your company to accept these considerations and to be polite.

"When you're in a village hall after the show they do teas and cakes and stand around and chat and this is when a company gets immediate feedback..."

Rod Burnett, Storybox Theatre



The Dhol Foundation - Take Art Project - Photo by Kate Green



Evaluation and feedback are essential if you're planning on a long-term career in rural touring. The best and most successful companies are the ones who listen closely to the comments and criticisms from promoters, audiences, and schemes – and use that to improve their approach, their show, and the way they cater for rural audiences and the volunteer promoters.

From The Horse's Mouth

The most immediate feedback you will get is from the audience at the end of the show. They will stay behind to tell you how much they enjoyed it – or whether it wasn't their cup of tea! So even if you have a two-hour get out and a three-hour drive home, spend a little time listening to their thoughts.

From Schemes

Most schemes have a formal feedback process to check how things went for you and the promoters. Funders may request that this information is supplied in a particular format. Touring schemes appreciate an honest and open dialogue with companies as it is very useful in improving scheme practice. To find out what has been said about you, it may be necessary to phone the scheme for an informal chat as some may only offer feedback at the end of the touring season. Your feedback to the scheme is just as important – any praise, issues, and concerns you had such as how you were treated or how the night was run or indeed about the scheme management should be received positively. Some schemes' contracts require your feedback and in some cases your contract will stipulate that the payment of your fee is dependent on the return of a completed form.

Types Of Feedback You May Receive

- scheme report forms
- immediate reactions from the audience and promoters
- informal feedback from scheme staff after the performance
- promoters' own audience feedback forms
- comments book
- your own evaluation methods e.g. direct mailing literature from your company left with members of the audience.

Chapter Eight Summary

Evaluation and feedback are essential if you want a sustained career in rural touring.

- phone schemes and ask for promoter, audience, and staff feedback
- talk to promoters and audiences on the night; establish how useful your marketing material was, how well the show was received; how you could improve
- ask schemes, promoters, and audiences for examples of best practice – such as how other companies operate
- schemes may ask you for feedback on the venues and promoters.

Mtiebi, a ten-strong male voice choir from the Caucasian mountains of Georgia was brought to the East Midlands.

"I first saw Mtiebi (Morning Star) in the UK in July 2002 and was stunned by the quality of their voices and inspired to organise a rural tour. I knew that our promoters wouldn't ever get the chance to host Georgian music and dance in their hall, and that this would be a unique experience.

"During a 15 month period, I worked closely with Mtiebi's agent discussing and organising the tour: dates, budgets, workshops, the ethos of village hall touring, promoter needs, visas, work permits, publicity, and accommodation whilst raising money for the tour costs including air fares. As well as their performance fees, Mtiebi received income from workshops, CDs, and Georgian artefacts sold at each performance. The 18-date tour covered village venues throughout Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire. It's unlikely that the group had ever experienced a tour of this length and intensity.

They were utterly charmed by the rural audiences, the intimacy of the venues and thrived on the experience. The resonance between Georgian songs and music, and its own deeply rural roots, struck a chord with our rural communities and their tradition. The 1,300 people who saw Mtiebi will carry these unfamiliar and powerful sounds and sights in their heads and hearts for a long time. The effort involved in making this tour happen was worth every second and I would do it all over again." **Sue Roberts, Artservice**

In many small communities in rural England, it is uncommon to host people from other countries, so you can be guaranteed that you will receive a great welcome from audiences of all ages wherever you go. In return the people that act as your hosts will expect you to be willing to 'share your story' with them, as well as giving a performance that they will remember for many years to come. As an overseas performer therefore, you have many advantages over a British-based one, but along with that come complications and extra hurdles that you need to overcome before you can step out onto the stage.

Before offering yourself for or accepting work on a rural touring scheme, it is important that you establish whether the show you have to offer will be successful with the audience who will be coming to see it. Will they understand it, will it have the same relevance to them as to an audience in your home country – does this matter?

They are likely to be of all ages and many may not be regular visitors to cultural events; consequently they may be unfamiliar with anything similar to what you have to offer. It may be that you will need to adapt your regular performance to suit this audience. You need to understand what is involved – the size of the venues that you may be performing in, the facilities that are available, and the conditions that are offered to you regarding accommodation and meals. In some places you may be required to stay in the house of one of the organisers and this may prove difficult for you in respect of your diet, the need to follow certain of your customs etc. You may need to consider different translation options for text-based or 'spoken' performances bearing in mind that the majority of venues will not have the capacity for surtitles. Also, translation as part of pastoral care for your visiting company should be agreed between you and the UK producer or booker/agent prior to arrival. It might be easier for your group to travel with a translator depending on the costs involved. Check all these things out with the Touring Scheme before committing to undertake a rural tour in England.

Having taken into consideration all these elements and decided to pursue the possibilities, it is advisable to seek the help of an agency or organisation in the UK to help you to understand and comply with all the regulations that are in force with regard to working in this country.

There are many organisations that can help you enter the UK to perform – such as Visiting Arts, whose mission is strengthening intercultural understanding through the arts. Visiting Arts has a document called, 'Cutting through the red tape' which is a guide to work permits, visas, Foreign Entertainers tax, and other practical issues to consider when bringing artists and other people into the UK from overseas. Their web link is www.visitingarts.org.uk/redtape.html. They may also be able to put you in touch with other organisations such as the British Council through www.visitingarts.org.uk/othercontacts.html. You might also consider approaching the relevant Cultural Attache or cultural representative for your country in the UK. It is always worth informing them even if they are unable to help financially. They will most likely have mailing lists which could include audiences in rural areas and they may be able to assist with the marketing of your production.



Circus Berzercus - Night Out Wales - Photo by Kiran Ridley

"Bringing international artists to rural venues is an amazing experience - it's unique, often life-changing, always thrilling... It affords village communities opportunities that they wouldn't otherwise have."

Sue Roberts, Artservice



Seckou Keita - Photo by Hilary Shedel

Regulations to Check Out

- work permits – if you are not a citizen of the UK or certain European Union member countries you will be required to obtain a Work Permit in order to work here. This can only be obtained on your behalf by an Employer registered with the Home Office (who issue the permits from the Work Permits UK office). As long as you are a genuine performer and have the required proof of this and contracts of employment in this country, there should not be a problem obtaining a permit. It is best to allow a month for the work permit application to be processed. Information can be obtained from the website www.workpermits.gov.uk. The cost of a work permit is £153 whether it is for a group or an individual person. Without one you will not be allowed entry into the country
- visas – some nationalities also require a Visa in addition to a work permit. It is advisable to contact the British Embassy or Consulate in your own country prior to considering coming to work here to check on the need for one. This must be obtained in your own country by yourself. In order to get this you will first of all require a Work Permit and a letter of invitation from an agent or employer in the UK stating that all your fees, accommodation and meals will be paid for over here. Obtaining your visa may take some time so ensure that you apply well in advance
- foreign tax – all overseas artists, even those with British passports but living abroad, will need to pay Foreign Tax for any fees earned over a threshold of £1000 during a tour period. Income is calculated against expenditure, and it is often the case that after all the costs of travelling to the UK, transport within it, costs of producing your publicity material and agency costs (if you employ one) your tax liability may end up as zero, or very low. Any tax paid in this country can be claimed back against your earnings once you submit your tax return in your home country. An application can be made on your behalf for an exemption or reduced tax liability, by your agent
- public liability insurance – more and more venues in the UK are requiring performers to have Public Liability Insurance. This covers you in case any member of the public injures themselves as a result of you or your performance. For musicians, The Musicians' Union cover their members for this, so it is worth checking with the Union in your own country to see if membership at home could cover you over here. Other unions for other art forms are likely to have similar arrangements. Failing that it is possible to obtain temporary cover once over here
- CRB disclosure checks – for many artists where their work takes them into contact with children, there is a requirement that they are CRB (Criminal Records Bureau) checked to ensure that they have no criminal records that may affect their work with children. This process needs to

be carried out by a registered organisation and can take several weeks to do. Forms need to be filled in by each artist and submitted for checking. Once cleared and having obtained CRB status, this can last for several years

- PAT tests on equipment – all electrical equipment is required to have an annual test to ensure its safety. For overseas artists it maybe easier to hire any electrical equipment in this country – this should have a PAT certificate with it. Any equipment that needs to plug into UK electrical supplies – please note that the voltage supply in this country is 240V and you will require a voltage adaptor.

Marketing Yourself

As for all artists, the quality of the publicity material you produce will reflect on the image that you give to the potential promoters of your shows and to your audience. Your audiences are unlikely to be familiar with you and your performance and therefore it is more important than ever that your posters and flyers show them what to expect. It is also vital that they are good quality. It is often cheaper to get posters and flyers printed in this country, even if the artwork is produced back home. In the UK the paper sizes are different to those in North America so this must be borne in mind when designing artwork for printing.

Agents

The amount of knowledge required of the systems over here and the work required to ensure that you carry out and adhere to all the regulations, makes it almost essential to have a good agent or representative working on your behalf over here. They will be familiar with the requirements and how to satisfy them and will be able to help you with working out budgets, sorting out transport arrangements, plan a marketing strategy for you and undertake many other general tasks. They will also have a UK bank account which may help when payments are required in advance. Perhaps most importantly they will give you peace of mind as well as providing a contact based in this country for the Rural Touring Scheme co-ordinators and the local promoters.

Chapter Nine Summary

Before you embark on rural touring:

- check to ensure that you will suit it and it will suit you!
- find an agent or qualified representative that can act on your behalf to identify and secure the necessary documentation you require
- ensure that your Marketing material clearly reflects what you do and ensure that it is good quality
- check regulations in relation to work permits, tax and visas
- consider other requirements such as Public Liability Insurance, PAT testing and CRB disclosures.

Appendix 1:

Sample of a scheme programming policy

Lincolnshire Rural and Community Touring Scheme: Artistic Programming Policy

The Lincolnshire Rural and Community Touring Scheme has a duty to provide access to the rural communities of the County to touring work of the highest quality which is suitable for rural audiences of all ages. Work across all the live performing arts – reflecting wide and diverse cultural opportunities – is selected based on the following criteria:

- Quality, appropriateness, professional status, exceptionalism and innovativeness of work
- Ability to present the work in non-equipped venues (the performance must be able to fit into small venues most of which do not have lighting and sound equipment and may not have a stage)
- The need to achieve a balance within the programme of different and diverse work including: drama, dance, wide range of music, opera, mask & physical theatre, circus, performance poetry and storytelling, cross arts forms, cultural diversity and international work
- The track record of the company or performer(s) including references, where available, from other touring schemes, Arts Councils, local authority arts officers or specialist arts agencies
- Evidence of approval of quality in the form of Arts Council or Local Authority funding support or Arts Council assessors' reports on companies or other verifiable sources
- The ability of the company or performers to present their work to a mixed (non-segmented) audience and to work effectively with a range of voluntary promoters in their local venue
- The company or performers' back-up in terms of high quality and appealing publicity and print materials, sound and efficient administration, full technical support and transport, insurance and other health and safety requirements

- The company or performers' commitment to, and understanding of, the needs of rural and community touring
- The contribution the tour will make to the development of the scheme.

The highest quality and most suitable professional companies and performers from around the UK, and internationally, are selected against the above criteria to ensure that Lincolnshire audiences and venues are guaranteed access to the best and most appropriate professional performances and in accordance with best practice and the reputation of the scheme built over many years. Within the programming policy, there is a chance for audiences and companies to develop, over a period of time, a working relationship, which in turn helps to guarantee a quality experience and embed trust and confidence in the scheme. This is critical with voluntary promoters.

In programming, care is taken to use public subsidy wisely, with quality control, artistic integrity, breadth, variety and cultural diversity of programming, including BME work and work from disabled artists, and adherence to the principle that the scheme will access promoters and audiences to work which extends experience, surprises, excites, develops new audiences to different art forms, challenges artistically and also affords opportunities for promoters and audiences in the County to see work that they would otherwise be unable to present in their local venue without the Arts Council/Local Authority subsidy or the scheme's programming and administrative support.

Companies and performers based within the County of Lincolnshire and the East Midlands are considered on the same basis. Where they meet the above criteria, they are considered for selection to tour on the scheme.

The scheme coordinator works positively with Arts Officers and Arts Council England, East Midlands to identify Lincolnshire based companies and performers which can contribute to the scheme and which meet the needs of the County's promoters and audiences and the criteria above.

Sue Roberts, Artservice 2005

Appendix 2:

Independent Theatre Council's (ITC) legal recommendations

Legal Recommendations

"ITC promotes the principle that 'Good art thrives on good management'. An underpinning of basic legal knowledge is therefore an essential part of good arts management. An introduction to some of the basics is set out below."

Jackie Elliman, Legal & Industrial Relations Manager of the Independent Theatre Council (ITC)

Before you go out on the road check the following:

Can Your Company All Work For You?

- CRB disclosure: If your company members are going to be working with children or vulnerable adults, have they undergone CRB checks to ensure that they are not barred from this work. More information at www.crb.gov.uk
- Right to Work in the UK: Does everyone in your company have the right to be in the UK and to work here? The Home Office has issued a list of documents they will accept as proof of nationality. www.homeoffice.gov.uk

Do You Comply With Health & Safety Regulations?

There is a wide range of legislation covering Health & Safety at work. You are responsible for the health & safety of all your workers, visitors and audiences etc. With five or more employees you must have a written Health & Safety Policy. If you have fewer it is still a sensible thing to do. The research will provide an opportunity to find out what hazards and risks your work contains, the extent of these hazards and risks and ways to control or minimise them. More information from www.hse.gov.uk

Are You Insured?

- Employer's liability: The law says you must insure against liability for injury or disease to all workers (employees, freelancers and volunteers) that arises from their work with you
- Public liability: Public liability insurance covers you for claims made by members of the public or other businesses. A venue's public liability may not be enough to cover you if your negligence has caused an incident
- Motor insurance: Make sure your vehicles are insured and that the insurance covers everyone you want to drive your vehicles
- Contents insurance: Make sure your contents are covered, at your base and away from it.

Do You Have The Necessary Licences?

- Premises: Make sure that all performance spaces have a licence by talking with the scheme managers when you arrange dates. They work with the promoters to ensure all licenses are in place. They will be able to tell you whether the venues license allows performances only or whether it also includes provision for the sale of alcohol. If you are

working in a public space it should have either a Premises Licence or the show should be covered by a Temporary Event Notice with provision for Regulated Entertainment. For more information on this visit www.culture.gov.uk/alcohol_and_entertainment/

- Music: If you are using recorded music you will have to be sure you have the right to use copyright work. Generally this can be done via the PRS; you will need to check with the touring scheme that the venues you are visiting are PRS licensed and you will have to provide details of all music you are using. You also need to be sure that you have the right to make your own recordings of any music – check this with the Mechanical Copyright Protection Society. More information from www.mcps-prs-alliance.co.uk

Other Essentials

- Tax, NI and VAT: www.hmrc.gov.uk
- Company structure: www.companieshouse.gov.uk
- Charitable status: www.charity-commission.gov.uk
- Contracts Advice & Info/Contracts on the ITC site www.itc-arts.org

The Independent Theatre Council (ITC) is the UK's leading management association for the performing arts, representing around 700 organisations across the UK. ITC exists to enable the creation of high quality professional performing arts by supporting, representing and developing the people who manage and produce it. Members receive free advice on all the issues covered above, and much more. The ITC training programme is open to non-members and topics covered include Starting a Performing Arts Company; Booking a Tour; Site Specific Performance and a range of legal and financial essentials. More information www.itc-arts.org

Appendix 3:

Sample of a company enquiry information form

Company and Artists Information Form

LIVE & LOCAL recommends shows to its local promoters through an annual “menu” published every March. Much of the information requested below would be included in this menu in order to help the local promoter decide which show(s) they will book through LIVE & LOCAL. For example, the required size and/or format of the performance area (and associated technical equipment/control point) are important for working out their capacity and therefore box office potential. This may be critical to them choosing your show and should not be your estimation or best guess based on last year’s show! In addition to this form, please feel free to send any other materials or information that you may ordinarily send to potential bookers. NB: Providing this information does not mean that you are automatically in the next menu.

Contact Details
Company Name _____
Main Contact _____
Address _____

Contact Numbers
Admin _____
Fax _____
Mobile _____
E-Mail _____
Website _____

Are you a Limited Company? Yes No
Do you send out your own contracts? Yes No
Are you VAT registered? Yes No
Do you have Public Liability insurance? Yes No
For how much? _____
Which region are you based in? _____
Have you worked with other touring scheme(s)? Yes No
Which schemes? _____

Who are your contacts for?
Artistic Direction _____
Technical _____
Marketing _____
Administration _____

The Show(s) please fill in separate pages 2-4 for each show.
Show Title _____

Is this a new show for current financial Year? Yes No

When is this show available (or not available if that is easier)?

Do you offer workshops? Yes No

Basic details

Specific Show Features

Shows change during their development, however it is important that we know as much as possible about the show now – and if you are put in the menu, that we **are kept up to date with changes**. Please include on a separate sheet or on page 4 as much as you can about the show including:

- What the show is like (synopsis, style, visually, musically)
- Number of performers
- Type/style of music in the show
- Set description
- Writer, Director, Designer
- Is there anything about the show that is particularly interesting? (Clever set, famous performer?)
- Is there anything about this show that you think is particularly suitable for people with impairments? (This question relates to our Disability Action Plan – call to discuss if necessary).

Technical

Tell us your **IDEAL** performance area? (**Height, width & depth and relationship to audience**). Also your **MINIMUM** area. How will you deal with sightline problems in village halls? NB: If you require a 20’x20’ area, only 25% of our venues can even consider booking you. If you can manage 15’x15’ this becomes approx 50%. (Flexibility as regards less width for more depth and vice versa can make all the difference)

Ideal performance area

Minimum performance area

Relationship to audience (end on/thrust/round)

Do you tour your own Lighting? Yes No

Control point size and position?

Lighting Stand Positions?

Do you tour your own Sound? Yes No

Are there any effects (smoke etc)? Yes No

What is your required Get In time? (Before doors open)

Get out time?

What is the running time of the show?

Is there an interval? Yes No

Do you tour your own Technician? Yes No

Have you carried out a risk assessment for this show?

Yes No

(We may ask to see this, especially for drama).

Marketing

Do you provide?

Brochure/magazine copy Yes No

Sample direct mail letters Yes No

Information on target audiences Yes No (see below)

Company background details Yes No

CD or Video sample Yes No

What

Reviews of previous show Yes No

Sample press release Yes No

Pre-production photographs Yes No (need by mid Feb.)

Production photographs Yes No

Do you have a mailing list? Yes No

Print (Posters/Leaflets) Yes No (see below)

Target audiences: We categorise each show to help promoters choose which ones would work best for different audiences in their venue. Please tell us which one you best suit (+ an age range) however feel free to expand on this very basic information!

- Adults/Older children (+age range): Suitable for adults and older children
- Adults/Family (+age range): All ages can enjoy the show. But not for large "groups" of children.
- Family (+age range): Aimed at a younger audience. Will be enjoyed by accompanying oldies!
- Children (+age range): Particularly aimed at a young audience including "groups" of children.

Who are the target audience for this show?

What are the main selling points for this show? Why should someone come to the show?

Print: **Delivery dates, quantity, quality and overprint space will be agreed before you go in the menu and will be specified on your contracts. There will be a penalty clauses relating to these points.**

If you provide print... (Much preferred!)

- Quantities: At least 500 leaflets and 30 posters per event. (larger venues: 1000 leaflets & 50 posters)
- Delivery: At Live & Local office a minimum of 10 weeks before a show
- Overprint space: 20% of leaflet/poster should be clear space.
- Size/Shape: At least A4 & A5s. A few A3 are useful for larger display sites
- Quality: High gloss finishes are not obligatory for a good quality leaflet. The following materials cannot be overprinted using our photocopier: varnished/coated paper, heavy weight paper or card or very flimsy paper and non standard sizes. We can provide samples which work and a Fact Sheet on print.

If you don't provide print... (we much prefer if you can provide professionally designed print) we can produce in-house publicity on 100gsm paper and a digital photocopier.

To do this we need a selection of high quality graphics/photographs at least 10 weeks beforehand. If you do not provide print we need to know before you go in the menu. **Please call us to discuss. We can also e-mail you a Fact Sheet on our Print needs.**

How much print (per venue)?

What format?

Do you produce a programme? Yes No Don't Know

Finance

What is the fee for this show?

Detail any multiple booking discounts

Is this fee inclusive of accommodation Yes No

Is this fee inclusive of print Yes No

Is this fee inclusive of travel Yes No

If not please detail requirements:

Accommodation (Nos/gender/max travel distance you are prepared to travel home)

Travel

Additional print (Minimum print amounts as detailed previously should normally be inclusive to fee)

Summary

Why should we feature you in the Menu for Promoters?

Why should they book you?

Why should their audiences come to the show?

Additional Information

Appendix 4:

Sample of a scheme menu

Strangeface Theatre Company - Hell & High Water

Blue Chicken* gave it their all and the performance was a riot of energy and fun...Excellent masks – only four people?

Audience

- There are some shows you just know are going to work in our venues and this one was spotted by us at the Edinburgh Festival in 2005 where we booked them on the spot, and shiver me timbers, it's back for another go: everyone who had them last year seems to want them back!
- There's slapstick galore and plenty of chances to boo and cheer in this panto-like romp about two women who become pirates – they're Thelma and Louise in britches! The show is perfect for a mixed age family audience (age recommendation 10+) and it's got the feel of the film Pirates of the Caribbean – although sadly there's no Johnny Depp in it.
- The show is packed full of memorable moments...including terrific costumes and fantastic masks which set the scene for some great characters. This is the company who made masks for well-known theatre company Trestle, and they also made the huge Margaret Thatcher Puppet for the stage version of Billy Elliot.
- Watch out for the gormless cabin boy "Powder Monkey"; the put upon husband "Frank" (who gets the plague, dies, but just can't stop himself coming back); the bad tempered celebrity chef "Cook Au Vin"; and Death himself (with his lovely toothy grin) who just keeps lurking around waiting for the body count!
- The set is great fun too – with mini windows in it, that arms, legs, bones, guns, flags and fish poke through when you least expect it, and look out for the very cute rat puppet who is Powder Monkey's best friend.
- The story rattles along at a cracking pace and there's a lovely thigh slapping song at the end! At the end, the entire audience is invited "backstage" for a tour of the set and a chance to try the masks and props for themselves.

* The company have just changed their name: when they were with us last season they were known as Blue Chicken Theatre Company. www.strangeface.co.uk

Suitable: Adult/Family (10+)

Running: 1hr 15min + Interval

Available: Nov 22 – 26

Licence: Premises (Including Plays)

Seating: Theatre

Format: End On

Size: Ideal performance area: 20'W x 16'D x 10'H

Min performance area: 15'W x 15'D x 10'H

(If a raised stage then min area: 16'W x 16'D x 10'H)

Notes: No Smoking Get In: 1.5 hrs Get Out: 1 hr

COST TO SCHEME: £XXX.XX

COST TO PROMOTERS: £XXX.XX

Appendix 5:

Sample of a performer responsibility contract

Responsibilities & Conditions Of Touring

Please read carefully. You are responsible for the following:

1. Contacting the promoter(s) well in advance of the performance to make all necessary arrangements for the day of the performance. Preferably, early contact should be made directly after the tour has been confirmed by **Artservice**, and then again at a date nearer the tour to confirm arrival times and other arrangements.
2. Providing all the manpower required for the performance unless agreed otherwise.
3. Provide and meet the cost of own transport as part of the agreed all-inclusive fee.
4. Unless agreed otherwise, provide the promoter with **posters and flyers**, as arranged with **Artservice**, for promoters to overprint. **All publicity should be sent to promoters a minimum of 8 weeks prior to the tour.**
5. Exchanging a simple, uncomplicated contract, which is appropriate to a voluntary promoting group in a non-arts venue. Please do not issue 'standard' contracts used for dedicated arts venues since these are likely to contain inappropriate demands for technical support, which cannot be met, as this is likely to alarm promoters.
6. For each performance, invoice as detailed in your letter of confirmation. **Note that the invoicing system varies in each of the different county schemes and that we have tried to make this as clear as possible.**
7. Obtaining venue details and directions from the promoter.
8. **Arranging and meeting the cost of accommodation unless otherwise agreed. Artservice** is more than happy to supply advice and information about suitable accommodation in the county, but will not book accommodation. If accommodation/hospitality has been agreed as part of the fee, this will be the responsibility of the promoter and you should discuss details directly with the promoter. It will have been made clear on the programme that accommodation is required. If not previously agreed with **Artservice**, do not ask the promoter for accommodation.
9. Keeping to the get-in time, agreed with **Artservice**, so that the promoter is not kept needlessly waiting at the venue or paying more for hiring the venue than is strictly necessary. If the get-in time proves to be shorter than that originally agreed with **Artservice**, the company/performer should inform the promoter and agree a revised time of arrival. Even if Company set up time is minimal, you should arrive at least 1 hour 30 minutes before the performance is due

to commence to meet with the promoter, acclimatise to the space, set up and maybe take refreshments prepared by the promoter. Getting to the promoter in good time is simple courtesy and prevents them from worrying about where you are. Please leave time for slow travel on country roads!

10. Where refreshments are requested, the company/performer should be realistic about what can be provided by voluntary promoters and try not to be over demanding. Where the promoter agrees to provide refreshments, these arrangements will need to be confirmed and agreed with individual promoters.
11. Please do not make technical demands on promoters that are different from those agreed with **Artservice**.
12. If you are offering workshops to young people under 18 years, as part of the package, please ensure that you have an Enhanced Disclosure Document. For more info, check the web site: www.disclosure.gov.uk
13. Company/performers should have full insurance cover for damage caused by the company/performer to property or persons. Please ensure that all equipment used is in good condition and will not endanger the health and safety of the venue and its users.
14. The terms of the tour as agreed with **Artservice**, including technical requirements, duration, and content of performance (including an interval where indicated) start time, fee arrangements, get-in and get-out times, publicity and all other matters agreed, should not be altered without prior agreement with **Artservice**.
15. **Artservice** reserves the right to withhold fee payment if any of the above conditions are not adhered to.
16. Please ensure that you ring the venues during the week prior to your tour to advise arrival time.

Appendix 6:

Sample of a marketing request sheet

Guidelines for Companies working with VIA

If you are used to Rural Touring then you will know most of the following already. However, below are a few points to help you to work with us to provide the best possible experience for our Promoters and audiences.

POSTERS – please supply them at least 10 weeks in advance

- Ideally we need good quality “poster blanks” so that we can overprint with the information for each event
- Please leave a clear, regular shaped, space on the poster (at least 20cm x 7cm on A4 size) for this information
- Use matt art paper or equivalent to accommodate overprinting through a photocopier. Most glossy or coated paper bubbles and jams the photocopier.
- If no blanks are available we can use an image supplied by you, sent to us by e-mail, using a compressed format such as “J-peg”.
- Please bear in mind that this must photocopy well, be clear and a good indication of the type of show or music you are providing. A large area of dark colour does not copy well.

SIZE MATTERS!

- Best sizes are A4 and A5. Large size posters are of limited use in small locations
- Most venues need approximately 20 – 30 x A4 and 200 x A5.

INFORMATION

- Posters need to have a strong visual image PLUS an indication in words of the type of show or music AND if possible a few descriptive words or quotes
- If it is relevant, state what age the show is suitable for
- It is useful to have as much information as possible on the back of A5 flyers. If we at VIA haven’t seen the show this will help us to sell it.

CONTACT

- PLEASE contact the local promoter about 1 month in advance to arrange details
- Some of our promoters are experienced, some are not and may panic if they don’t hear from you.

Roger Werner, VIA Director

Why Not Join The National Rural Touring Forum?

NRTF is the umbrella body for organisations and individuals involved in the promotion of professional arts events with rural and other communities.

"NRTF is a special mix of a thoroughly professional and dynamic organisation that is also friendly, informal and innovative. The annual conference is one of the best... useful, enjoyable and inspiring." **Nick Jones, Arts Consultant and Founder of Eden Arts**

What Does NRTF Do?

NRTF helps its members increase access to the arts for rural and other communities by promoting the development and provision of professional arts activities. NRTF supports and promotes:

- Programmes of professional activity that are of a high quality and appropriate to the needs of its constituents
- Opportunities for rural and other communities to engage with professional artists and for artists to work with those communities
- Collaboration and partnership with other organisations to maximise the range, breadth and quality of work taking place.

How Do We Do It?

- NRTF has a wide influence because of its members and partners. However, it is run as a small organisation with part-time paid co-ordinators and a part-time development director
- NRTF responds quickly and efficiently to the needs of its members
- A voluntary board of touring scheme managers is elected by the membership at the annual conference. In addition the board can co-opt special expertise as appropriate
- Each region of the country has a representative on the board, all members are able to contact the board via their regional representative
- All members have access to the staffed central office who will respond quickly to queries.

Why Do We Do It?

NRTF is committed to the principal that there should be genuine equality of opportunity for all sections of the population in the practice, appreciation and enjoyment of the arts. NRTF believes that:

- High quality, live arts performance offers a unique experience, which is life-enhancing and sometimes life changing
- Rural isolation, poverty, social exclusion and similar disadvantages should not prevent people from having good access to those experiences
- Local people are essential actors in local arts development
- The results of successful arts promotion extend widely and contribute to personal growth and strong, sustainable communities.

What Are The Benefits Of Membership?

Be part of a network of professionals:

- NRTF supports an annual conference, regional meetings and keeps in regular touch with all its members via e-mail
- All members receive advance booking opportunities and reduced prices for the annual conference
- All members are able to keep in touch with each other via the NRTF members' contact database on the website or via the website message board
- All members can ask for information, help and advice from the central office and from other members
- NRTF highlights examples of good practice with case studies at conferences and in various publications
- NRTF conducts a skills audit to locate members with special knowledge so that we can put you in touch with the right people.

Keep up to date with new initiatives:

- NRTF forms strategic partnerships with regional and national development and funding organisations
- NRTF makes the case at national, regional and local level for rural touring and community-based arts initiatives to be incorporated into social and economic policies effecting rural life
- NRTF undertakes research to influence debate and inform good practice
- NRTF endeavours to keep rural touring on the agenda and ensure that all our members are kept up to date with any new developments that may affect their work
- NRTF produces advocacy leaflets and other publications – all available free to members.

Help develop the sector:

- NRTF supports the professional development of its full members through a grants programme to encourage mentoring placements, regional meetings, and going to see new companies or performers
- NRTF collaborates with partners to develop new initiatives linked to social inclusion, diversity, international links, and the commissioning of new work
- Full members are eligible to apply for strategic development grants
- All our members are able to benefit by working together in partnership.

Who Can Join The NRTF?

If you are an organisation or an individual with an interest in promoting professional arts events with rural and other communities you can join us and be part of the rural touring network that is the NRTF.

For more information on the NRTF and its members or to apply for membership go to www.nrtf.org.uk and click "about the NRTF".

"I find that NRTF, especially the excellent conference, is invaluable as it gives me a chance to catch up with what is happening across the rest of the UK in rural touring"
Sandy Maxwell, North East Arts Touring Co-ordinator





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