



Do you remember Back of the Bus?

Sometimes, something comes along that's so exciting, so unusual or just simply so plain daft that we decide to make it happen. Black of the Bus was one of those projects.

After seeing New Zealand Dance Company perform Back of the Bus at the Edinburgh Festival, and hearing they were interested in UK tours, we couldn't resist trying to bring them to Lancashire. 'Back of the Bus' is a dance show that happens on the top deck of a bus, and has been to New Zealand, Australia, Edinburgh and now Lancashire, picking up brilliant reviews along the way.

In June 2015, audiences were invited to ride on a bus through the streets of Pennine Lancashire for a six-day tour that included 24 venues, 13 shows, 4 international artists, and 1 double-decker bus. Dancers propelled themselves along the aisles and hung from the roof. A magical mystery tour which combined dance, comedy and a double-decker bus.

The logistics involved in communicating not only with a company on the other side of the world but also our local transport company, Transdev, was no mean feat, but it was worth it when we heard audience members ask 'Why isn't this happening in Manchester?' and we could answer with confidence 'Why shouldn't it happen here?'

Who else is on the bus, and what do we know of their lives? That is the question that inspired Java Dance to create this show. The audience boards the bus, not knowing which of their fellow



passengers are performers. Around the first corner, someone gets on, overloaded with shopping. The next few minutes see food, coins and the dancer all over the place as she tries to find her purse, find a seat and settle down. Another performer flirts with us, then takes us to a park to dance. A third is clearly anxious and stressed about her journey. The show follows the characters home, then back on the bus, as they get ready for a night out. The finale takes place in a bar.

"Back of the bus was the start of my local theatre dreams, bringing wonder to my world"

Bringing 'Back of the Bus' to Pennine Lancashire not only gave audiences a chance to see international dance, but also introduced them to new spaces in their local area, and showed them spaces they were familiar with in a new light. It was important to us to show audiences that art doesn't have to be confined to four walls. This also allowed us to reach new audiences, as passersby could catch parts of the show without committing to a ticket.

"We didn't know what to expect and were not disappointed! Loved it! I will never get on or off a bus without thinking of this performance!"

"Performances like this are a little holiday in everyday life"

We got in touch with Sacha Copland, Artistic Director of Java Dance Theatre who has sent Spot On a birthday message. You can view it here: <https://youtube.com/shorts/zxP48Ggw5Jo>

A host of other partners were involved as stops for the bus, bringing audiences and generally supporting the project, for which all the strategic partners were extremely grateful. These include:

Transdev
Lancashire County Council Library Service
Plugged In, Culturapedia
Accrington Library King George's Hall, The Howarth Gallery
BBC Radio Lancashire, Pendle Borough Council, The Muni, Colne
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, Pendle Leisure Trust, The New Era Centre
Blaze, Slynco, The Shop, Nelson
Burnley Library, The Ace Centre, Victoria Park Pavilion, Burnley Youth Theatre
The Bureau Arts Centre, Super Slow Way
Walton Lane Community Centre, Craft and Crumpets, Accrington
The Burnley at Home project
Wensley Fold Primary School
Darwen Library Theatre, The Burnley Mechanics
Grants Bar
The Colne Millennium Green

