



What's it like to be a Spot On promoter?

‘Everyone left with smiling faces!’

Seamus Heffernan is an independent music promoter who has hosted events within Mellor Brook Community Centre for over 21 years. The Centre has a reputation for teaming live music with real ale, but through Spot On, the a wider audience.



“I first got involved with the community centre nearly 25 years ago when I answered an SOS from two local ladies who were the remaining members of the committee. It went something like: ‘If you don’t turn up to the next AGM you won’t have a bloody community centre’ and a few of us answered the call. I said ‘well I’m in music, what about if I put on a concert?’ I invited all my mates and I said ‘you won’t have heard of this guy but just come and support the cause, you’ll probably like it’ and we got 80 people. Everybody left with smiling faces and we sold lots of beer! It was supposed to be a one off, well I got the bug then didn’t I?”

Working alongside long term friend, Janet Aspin, the pair have put on over a hundred shows at Mellor Brook. The programme has mainly focussed on folk music. “I used to be fearful of the ‘F word’, when branding. But I’ve decided to celebrate folk music. It used to be taboo, with people imagining it as old fashioned. But we’ve embraced the variety of music performers and Spot On has helped us to increase that diversity.”

The first Spot On show at Mellor Brook Community Centre was a folk band called Hoover The Dog, (November 2004). But for Seamus some of the real highlights have been Spot On’s international performers - Waggish Radish, a Bulgarian puppet company (October 2005). Motus O, (December 2006), a Canadian dance company. “It took forever for them to pack things away because they were flying out the next day. It was well after midnight before we got rid of them!”

For the last ten years the Mellor Brook committee has tended to choose more theatrical shows. “That said, I loved the combination of theatre and folk music when we hosted the Ewan McColl story by Blaize Theatre. It was a lot of prep, squeezing the performance company into this space. But by the performance start it didn’t seem as if they were remotely restricted. That’s a sign of their professionalism. Four actors, singing, acting, costumes, lighting. All those elements there and it was a really good production, for a venue this size it’s so unusual to get such a high standard of everything.”

“It’s been a rollercoaster and I’ve loved it. Promoting isn’t just showing up and introducing somebody and letting them get on with it. There’s a huge amount of work, but having done one or two and learnt the ropes by doing it myself, making loads of mistakes, I like to think I’ve honed a system now and I know what I’m doing. Janet is still a huge support and I wouldn’t be able to do this without her.”

The venue will be hosting another international offering in November, from Spot On, with **Allison Lupton Trio**. Further details can be found on their online ticketing site:



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Oh La La featuring FiFi La Mer
Saturday 12th May 2021



In Skriker's Footsteps (Jacqueline Harris)
Saturday 19th November 2016

‘Step outside your comfort zone’

Ann Whitaker is Manager of The Rainhall Centre, a multipurpose business centre situated in the heart of Barnoldswick.

The centre, a former school, has a number of rented office spaces alongside a front facing community hub -

hosting a bank, NHS medical services, weekly community bookings and a seasonal theatre programme.

The Rainhall Centre team started hosting Spot On events as a satellite venue for the Skipton Puppet Festival in Spring 2010. Ann explains: “I think one of our earliest shows came through Lempen Puppet Theatre. It was Rod Burnett and Storybox Theatre, their show ‘The Three Little Pigs’. It was so popular and everybody loved it. We did quite a bit of children’s work at the beginning and they did well.”

For Ann, the power of theatre to captivate audiences was a big motivator to carry on hosting: “One of our earliest shows, The Mole Who Knew It Was None of His Business, really strikes a chord for me - the little mole had a poo on his head, and listening to the children in the audience laughing so hard, oh I can’t find the words to describe it! You left feeling really happy.”

Since the early days of hosting children’s theatre the venue has seen a dramatic shift in audience demographic. “The audience has changed a bit now and perhaps that’s why I remember the children’s work so fondly because they’ve grown up and moved on.”

With that shift in demographic has come a confidence in knowing her audience and that has had an impact on the adventurous choices of show from the venue. Ann and her team have had great success in hosting the Tashi Lhumpo Monks, a twelve strong group who offer an insight into their monastery culture and teachings. “Our audience are really well established, they look forward to their Spot On event. They come in to enquire about what’s coming next. They’ll step outside their comfort zone for a Spot On show too. They’ll come in and they’ll question it and ask for more information and that’s the time I can convince them - they’ll say ‘oooh, I’m not sure’ but then they buy a ticket and it broadens their horizons. Our audiences have the confidence in us to bring quality shows but in turn we have the confidence in Spot On to bring them to us.”

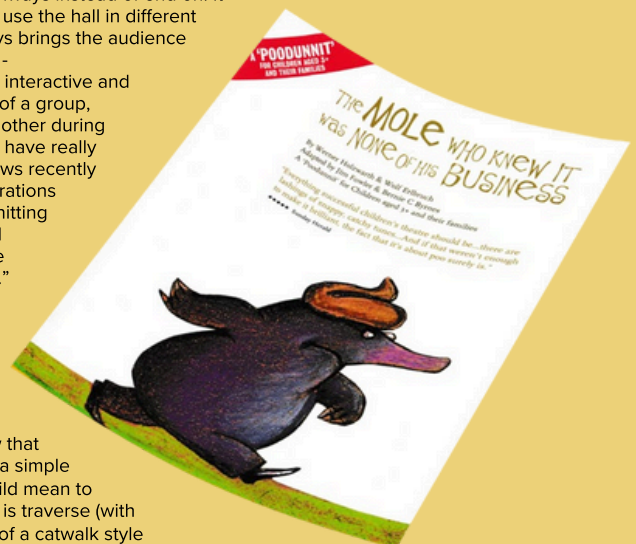
Over the years there has been a gradual decline in rural spaces hosting theatre events. “We’ve carried on with Spot On because the community really appreciates it. Barnoldswick isn’t an easy place to travel from. You really do need to have a car. Not everybody goes to Bradford or Manchester. We’re a bit stuck out bordering Yorkshire so I think our audiences really appreciate that this is theatre on their doorstep.”



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“The stamp of quality that a Spot On supported show offers, gives our audience the confidence to be willing to try it. They don’t always agree it was their thing or that it challenges their beliefs but we offer a chance for discussion around it.”

The Rainhall Centre Team recently hosted Kirk Dunn’s theatre / knitting show ‘The Knitting Pilgrim’ to a sell out audience who all brought their knitting. “Kirk’s show was great, the massive screens, combined with the subject matter - the politics of religion - it was amazing. “We had to reimagine how the hall would be laid out, they put the show lengthways instead of end on. It has been really great to use the hall in different configurations. Sideways brings the audience closer to the performer - it makes the show more interactive and the audience feel more of a group, being able to see each other during the show. Our audience have really enjoyed interactive shows recently - from cooking demonstrations and dance classes, to knitting workshops and political protests. It brings a nice ambience to the venue.”



The show for Autumn 2025 is Black Country Touring’s ‘Wild’, a show that began its creation with a simple question ‘What does Wild mean to you?’ The performance is traverse (with audience on two sides of a catwalk style stage), so the audience will be immersed in the production from the start.

