



Stronger Together Across the North

Spot On has collaborated with its wonderful northern touring partners almost from the beginning. We do this to share ideas, support each other and maximise opportunities for artists and communities. Here we celebrate some of those joint projects which have brought new shows and stories to rural communities across the north of England. Each project may have been designed and lead by a different northern partner, but we, our promoters and our audiences all benefitted.

Remember the millenium? We thought planes might fall out of the sky. Thanks to special millennium lottery funding Spot On collaborated with Highlights and On Tour and created the Boundaries commissioning and festival programme. Our first joint project! In 2000 we each commissioned a regional company to produce a new show on the theme of “Boundaries”, Talia Theatre, Offbeat Tales and RJC Dance toured 15 performances across our own and partners’ networks. We created a VHS video documentary about the project. Remember VHS?

We were so pleased with the success of Boundaries that we embarked on our first joint touring of an international company in 2001- this time lead by Get Moving. We welcomed the magnificent Acadian musicians Barachois from Prince Edward Island, Canada to seven northern venues. We were hooked and our collective relationship with Maritime Canada has carried on from there.

“Spellbinding brilliant- best night out for years!”

We were on a roll. Collaborating was exciting and fruitful. 2002 saw the Jiving Lindy Hoppers again lead by Get Moving touring 13 shows across five rural touring networks.

Next up, Vital Connections took place in 2007- 2008 with the Jiving Lindy Hoppers, Shiva Nova and Handful of Henna, a Sheffield Theatres production.

“The best thing I’ve seen in the North West for ages. Bring them back! - Audience member
“Young, vibrant and inventive and excellent visual art. Really accessible and inspiring”

We stepped up a gear in 2009 with the International Village of Culture commissions and conference in Durham. Our colleagues at Highlights spotted a development opportunity as a result of a City of Culture bidding round, and successfully brought the National Rural Touring Forum conference to the north. This combined with two international projects. Dodgy Clutch and Grand Theatre of Lemmings were commissioned to produce new touring shows and we toured three international companies Ro-toro (Estonia), Akseli Klonk (Finland) and Dautenis (Poland) across the north and the UK.



2016 saw Dance Across the North with Balbir Singh which we celebrated on 10th November as part of our 30 days of celebrations.

We also worked on artistic development with collaborations with both Manchester based PANDA (starting in 2014) and later ARC in Stockton. Opening up rural touring mentoring opportunities for artist to pitch for. The latter programme sadly being hit by Covid.

As a response to the impact of lockdown on touring artists' work, the northern schemes, lead by Highlights, developed the the 2021- 2023 HANDS mentoring programme supporting northern performers and companies to develop their work and find new business models. HANDS also resulted in a conference as part of the 2023 Burnley Words Festival.

Our collaborations continue- watch out for our two Canada days in November. You can visit www.northernconsortium.org.uk for more information on all the partners' joint work.

You can also watch a short documentary film about our joint work from 2009 (part of the Village of Culture programme) here: <https://youtu.be/aTKq-N2fWo8>

