



Artsreach is the rural touring scheme for Dorset, touring approximately 150 live performances a year to around 50 community venues. Established for over 25 years, Artsreach works in partnership with teams of volunteer promoters across the county, who select and host professional performing arts events in non-traditional mini-scale venues, mostly village halls. This way, small communities can access high quality art in a friendly, familiar environment without travelling far, and artists can enjoy performing in very active, sociable and enthusiastic communities. Venues - mostly village halls with less than 150 seats – are intimate and therefore tend to be much more engaging than a conventional theatre space. We always try to offer new companies each year, but also enjoy building relationships with companies over the years.

What we are looking for:

Artsreach works with a broad range of performance companies that produce and tour accessible performances of a high quality. We work with companies/artists based locally, regionally, nationally and occasionally internationally. In most cases we book companies that we have seen or that come recommended by other touring schemes, and companies that fit our artistic policy:

The majority of our venues are not technically equipped and we find it much easier to work with companies that bring their own lights and sound.

Attractive, informative, professionally produced publicity is essential. We are happy to give advice to you on this whilst you are at the design stage. First impressions make a big impact on promoters, and good publicity materials instil confidence.

How it works:

In rural touring the artist and the audience have an informal and intimate space to meet each other. There is no stage door, so make sure you are prepared for the delights and challenges that rural touring offers. If you are new to rural touring we strongly recommend that you go to www.ruraltouring.org and request a copy of 'Eyes Wide Open' – the guide for companies who are thinking about trying rural touring.

Please be aware that we hear from hundreds of companies wanting to tour with us. We endeavour to reply to everybody but sometimes something slips through the net. The better you present yourself/ves, the more enthusiastic we will be about working with you. We like companies that are communicative, hot on publicity and responsive.

Getting on the menu doesn't mean you're booked – but we hope that you will be, and will work hard to achieve this. Communities actively choose what shows they want to host in their spaces, with guidance from us. Successfully matching shows/ communities and venues is where our knowledge and experience comes in.

Our promoters are volunteers – they will make you a cup of tea, provide you with a hot meal, run the box office and often offer you a bed for the night – they are unlikely to have a formal marketing strategy or be able to operate a lighting board. Therefore your willingness and ability to communicate well with our promoters is of great value to both them and us!

When we need to hear from you:

The best time to send us information about your production is February/March. Between March and May our programming group go through all the show information sent to us and select productions to put forward for our 'menu' of events, which is then produced and distributed to our promoters mid-May. The menu gives details of all productions available for booking from September of that year through to the following Easter. Promoters select from this menu the shows they ideally would like to host in their community.

Our Performance Programme brochure comes out three times a year - the autumn programme covers September to December; the spring programme covers January to Easter (varying between March/April) and the slightly smaller summer programme covers April to August.

Selection Criteria

Artsreach strives to provide access for the rural communities of Dorset to touring work of the highest quality which is suitable for rural audiences of all ages, including drama, dance, music, physical theatre, circus, storytelling and multi-disciplinary art forms encompassing cultural diversity and international work. Work is selected with the following criteria in mind:

- The quality and the innovative nature of the work
- The promotion of new work by companies with whom a good partnership has been established and whose reputation for challenging and entertaining work is based upon the careful monitoring of recent performances
- The track record of the company or performer(s) based on the scheme manager's experience and knowledge, and/or references from other touring schemes, Arts Councils, local authority arts officers or specialist arts agencies and promoter reviews
- The company or performers' back up in terms of high quality and appropriate publicity materials, sound and efficient administration, full technical support and transport, insurance and adherence to other health and safety requirements
- The ability to present work in non-equipped venues (the staging of the performance must be adaptable to the range of venue sizes and varied technical resources)
- Ensuring that a range of art form and companies are represented within the programme
- The contribution the work will make to the development of the scheme.

Companies applying to the Artsreach scheme are considered against the above criteria and balanced with budget restrictions. Please email us any comments or questions.

Thank you.

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