

# BACK of the BUS

An evaluation report on the  
Plugged In and Super Slow Way  
tour On Java Dance's tour of  
Back of the Bus in Pennine  
Lancashire June 2015

**mailout.co**

## Contents

	Page
Partnership Working	2
The Show	3
The Schedule	5
Working with Transdev	6
Press Coverage	8
Social Media	8
Audience Feedback	9
Challenges	15
<i>Appendix 1</i>	
<i>Other events respondents would like to see</i>	<i>16</i>

## Partnership Working

The Back of the Bus project brought together a number of strategic partners. These included two Arts Council England Strategic Touring projects, Plugged In and Spot On Libraries. These two projects are both coordinated by Culturapedia; Pennine Lancashire's Creative people and places programme, Super Slow Way; Transdev, an international bus company who operate Lancashire Bus and The Lancashire Way and Java Dance Company from Wellington in New Zealand.

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 are extremely grateful. These include

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	Slyncs	The Shop, Nelson
Burnley Library	The Ace Centre	Victoria Park Pavillion
Burnley Youth Theatre	The Bureau Arts Centre	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	



Partners brought a wide range of things to the table including performance spaces, community ownership, paid audiences, additional audiences in the parks or at some of the community spaces we used, rehearsal space. Much of this support was in kind and contributed greatly to both the economic and social impact of the project.

## The Show

Contemporary dance on the top deck of a double decker bus.

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 board 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 dance in a park. A third is clearly anxious and stressed about her journey. The show follows the characters home and then back on the bus as they get ready for a night out. The finale takes place in a bar.

There is a great audio piece by Tom Walker from Radio Lancashire that gives us some of a running commentary. That can be heard [here](#).





## THE SCHEDULE

We gave the company an ambitious week-long schedule with a different town each day - a different route and different spaces to perform in. Previously the show has run for a week at festivals repeating the route each day.

We wanted to take the art to the people and repeat the show thirteen times over six days in six different Pennine Lancashire towns. Audiences in Pennine Lancashire are not used to contemporary dance or performances happening in unusual space.

The table below details showtimes and attendance figures

Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Town	Burnley	Darwen	Colne	Accrington	Nelson	Blackburn
11am	-	-	-	-	-	17
2pm	13	13	6 + 25 at Walton Lane	9 + 5 at New Era	7 + 12 at Victoria Park	26
7pm	30	17 + 4 at Knott Street	11 + 15 at Walton Lane	28 + 15 at New Era	7 + 50 at Victoria Park	25





# Working with Transdev

Blog posted by Rob Howell on Culturapedia.co

## When I grow up I want to drive a bus

Posted on June 25, 2015

It's great when you can sometimes take the opportunity of exploring someone else's world. This week we have had the amazing Java Dance Company touring Pennine Lancashire with their show Back of the Bus. This couldn't have been possible without the support of Transdev who gave us a double decker bus and drivers for a whole week.

I have to confess, I don't use the bus. I can't remember the last time I got on one in Blackburn, (In my defence I live right next door to the office). There is still a childlike thrill of going upstairs on a bus. The stairs themselves on a moving vehicle; the chance to sit at the front; the elevated views, the thwack of a leaf laden branch.

It has been the greatest of pleasures working with Transdev in Lancashire. Not only have they been really helpful and accommodating, I've got to spend time messing around on a double decker bus.

Organising a tour of six Lancashire towns with four stops in each has been a bit of a logistical challenge. If we'd thought long and hard about it before we embarked on the journey we might never have started. Once we'd found our stops we needed to work out how the bus would get there. We also needed to work out routes that lasted a set time between stops.

To do this I spent two mornings driving round, with a driver, on a double decker bus to work out just what would be possible. I spent a morning with the fabulous John (@twostoreyvolvo) in Burnley, Nelson and Colne working out the long way round to places, evaluating bridges, cursing low hanging trees and avoiding badly parked cars. On this trip we used one of the rather smart large Which Way busses, plush with leather seats and WiFi. We got some strange looks, off it's normal route, round the back lanes of Pendle. It is amazing just how maneuverable these beasts are. Lancashire's tight little industrial streets weren't built for such things but they've been designed to cope. It's a challenging job sometimes that involves a lot of training and skill. John deftly demonstrated a 360 degree turn at a junction that I would never have thought possible and described how the driver needs to aim the front wide to get round tight corners.

Our driver for Blackburn will be Anna, As we drove around town, I asked how she coped with other drivers "You have to be a bit Zen about it or you'd spend all day shouting at people" she told me. I could see why. A lot of people seem to do everything they can to get their car in front of the bus. Most of it not strictly legal and a lot of it very unsafe. From our elevated position we saw people on phones, reading maps and generally causing havoc.

We left Blackburn for a reccy of Darwen and Accrington with Mick. Darwen proved our biggest challenge. It is a steep valley with a busy main road running north to south. Not a lot of places the bus can turn around or take a shortcut back to the centre. Accrington was more interesting

and neither Mick nor I were geographical experts out of the town centre but we were really happy once we realised how quiet Manchester Road can be allowing us a straight flat run for the longest part of the show.

We spent Sunday morning at the bus depot in Blackburn with the dancers. Each bus is slightly different and they need to re-choreograph the whole piece each time. Transdev had taken our bus off the road a couple of days earlier for a through clean and buff up. I think we've fallen in love with her over the week.

The whole team has been out with the show at some point covering thirteen shows in all. Chatting to the drivers and the staff back at the depot, we've learned a lot about a world we'd never really ventured into before. I can safely say we're all converted to the joy of riding on a bus. It's given us lots more ideas – Watch out Transdev – we may well be back.





## Press Coverage

The show was featured in the Lancashire Telegraph on three separate occasions - the paper has a circulation of 13,000 and an estimated readership of 50,000.

It was also covered by the Blackburn Citizen and Blackpool Citizen (online, readerships unknown), the Westmorland Gazette (30,000/75,000) and The Shuttle (Online, unknown readership).

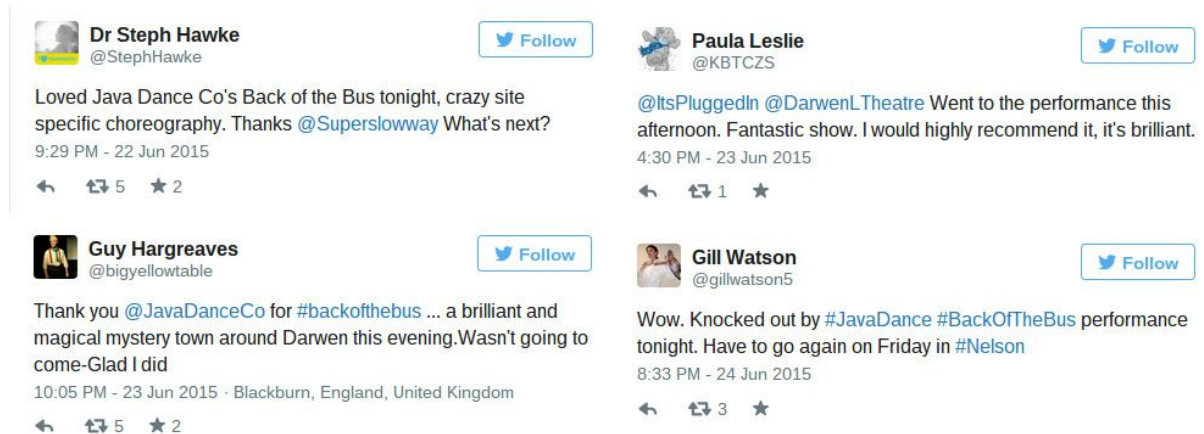
We also mentioned the show in three separate BBC Radio Lancashire Interviews - firstly on the afternoon show with Glen Hunt, then the afternoon show with John Gilmore and finally a feature from Tom Walker which aired on the breakfast show on two separate occasions. BBC Radio Lancashire has approx. 186,000 listeners/week.

## Social Media

### Twitter

- In June @itspluggedin tweeted 665 times (22% increase from previous month), contributing to 109,000 tweet impressions (51% increase), 3,301 profile visits (324% increase) and 88 mentions (184% increase).

### Audience tweets:



The image shows a screenshot of four tweets from Twitter, arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each tweet includes a profile picture, name, handle, text, timestamp, and interaction icons (reply, retweet, like). Each tweet also has a 'Follow' button.

- Dr Steph Hawke** (@StephHawke): "Loved Java Dance Co's Back of the Bus tonight, crazy site specific choreography. Thanks @Superslowway What's next?" (9:29 PM - 22 Jun 2015). 5 retweets, 2 likes.
- Paula Leslie** (@KBTCZS): "@ItsPluggedIn @DarwenLTheatre Went to the performance this afternoon. Fantastic show. I would highly recommend it, it's brilliant." (4:30 PM - 23 Jun 2015). 1 retweet, 1 like.
- Guy Hargreaves** (@bigyellowtable): "Thank you @JavaDanceCo for #backofthebus ... a brilliant and magical mystery town around Darwen this evening. Wasn't going to come-Glad I did" (10:05 PM - 23 Jun 2015 - Blackburn, England, United Kingdom). 5 retweets, 2 likes.
- Gill Watson** (@gillwatson5): "Wow. Knocked out by #JavaDance #BackOfTheBus performance tonight. Have to go again on Friday in #Nelson" (8:33 PM - 24 Jun 2015). 3 retweets, 1 like.

### Facebook

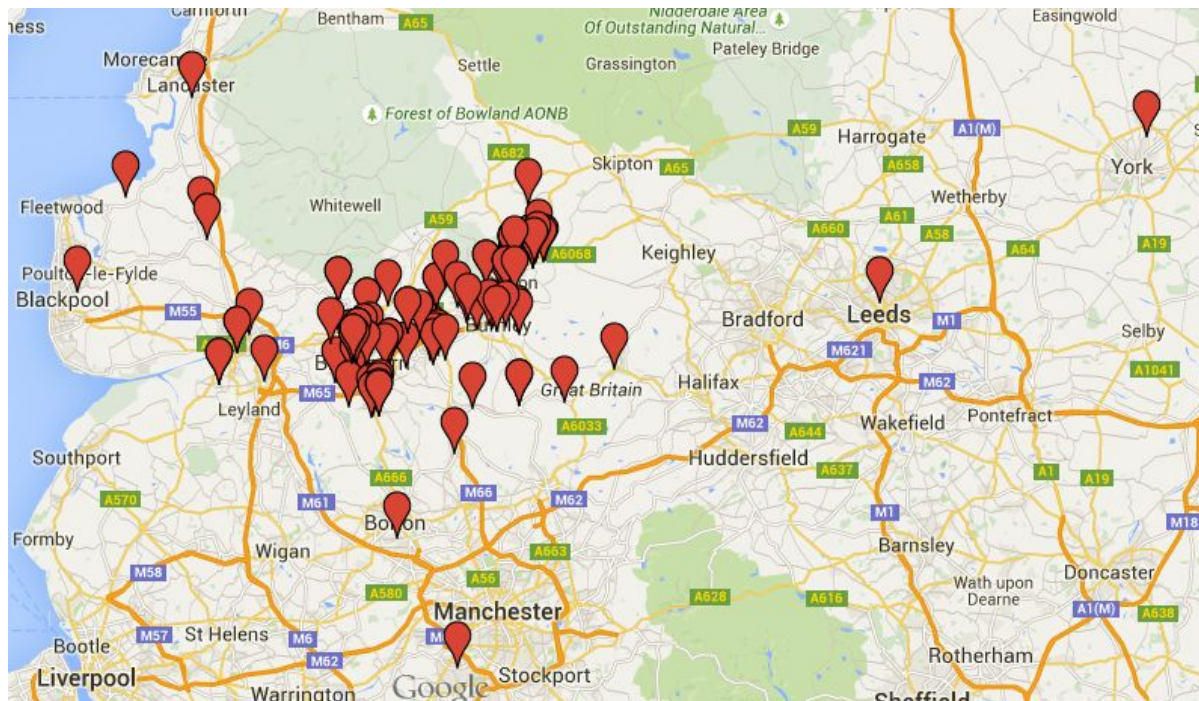
- Total page likes increased by 12% from May to June (147 to 164).
- The mean "total reach" per day increased by 204% from May to June (1,332 to 4,047).
- Timeline visits increased by 102% from May to June (97 to 196).

## Audience Feedback

We sought feedback from our audiences in the form of a questionnaire at the end of the show in the bar area while people were talking to the dancers and enjoying a drink.

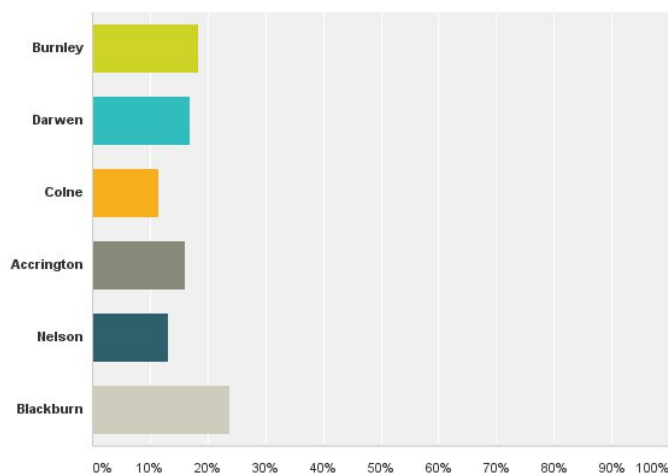
### Who did we get feedback from?

We received feedback from 130 audience members. Just over 71% (87) were female and just under 29%(35) were male with 8 people skipping the question..Our map clearly shows that the majority of the audience, based on postcode data, came from Pennine Lancashire



Q1 Where did you see the show?

Answered: 130 Skipped: 0

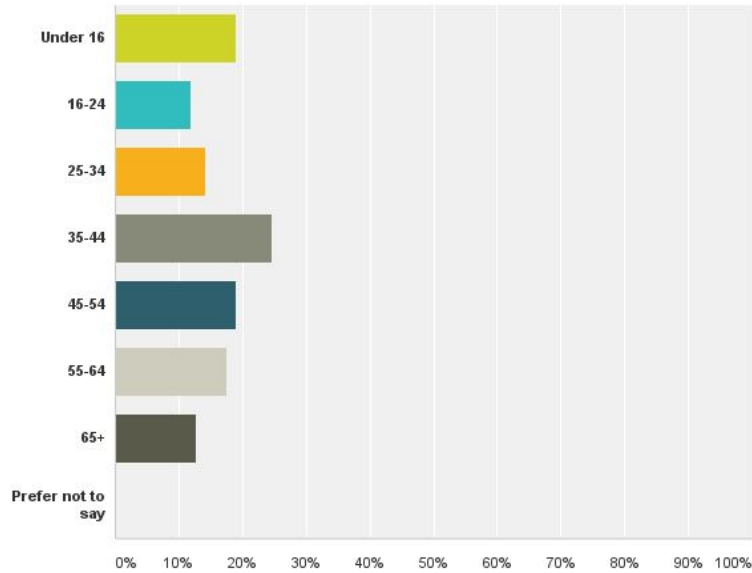


Our respondent rate was roughly in line with attendances for each town:

We asked the age ranges of people on our respondents party and got a remarkably even spread with a peak in the 35 -44 bracket

### Q11 How old are the people in your party?

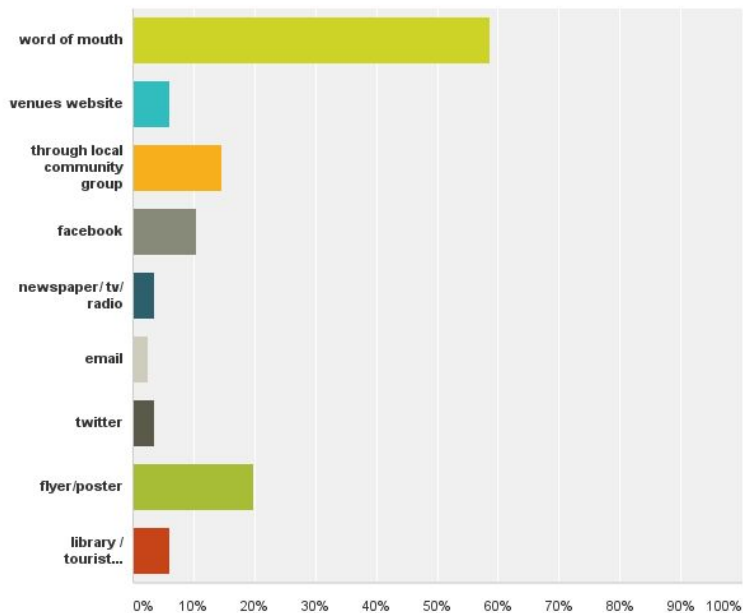
Answered: 126 Skipped: 4



We asked our audiences how they found out about the show. Word of mouth was overwhelmingly the most popular response at nearly 60%

### Q8 Where did you find out about today's show?

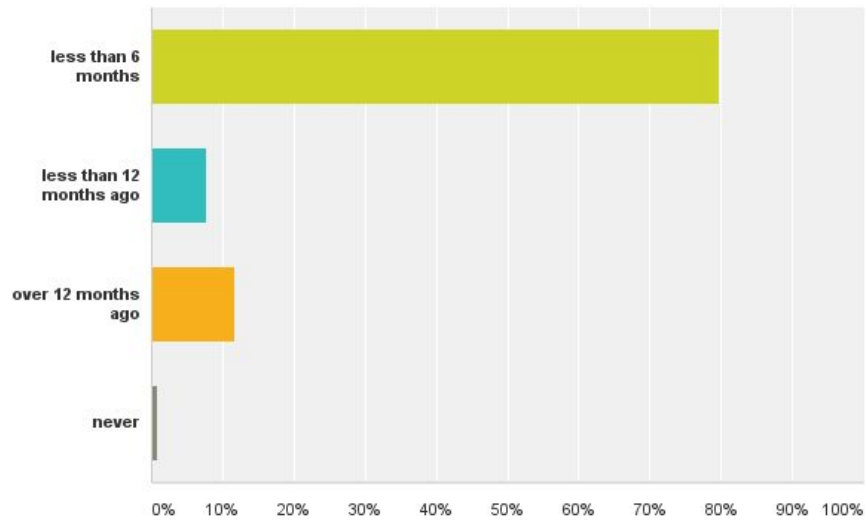
Answered: 116 Skipped: 14



80% of our respondents (103 people) said that they had attended a live performance in the past six months. with less than 12% saying that it had been more than a year since last attending something. This event didn't, therefore, encourage significant numbers of people new to attending live arts events.

### Q5 When was the last time you went to a live performance?

Answered: 129 Skipped: 1

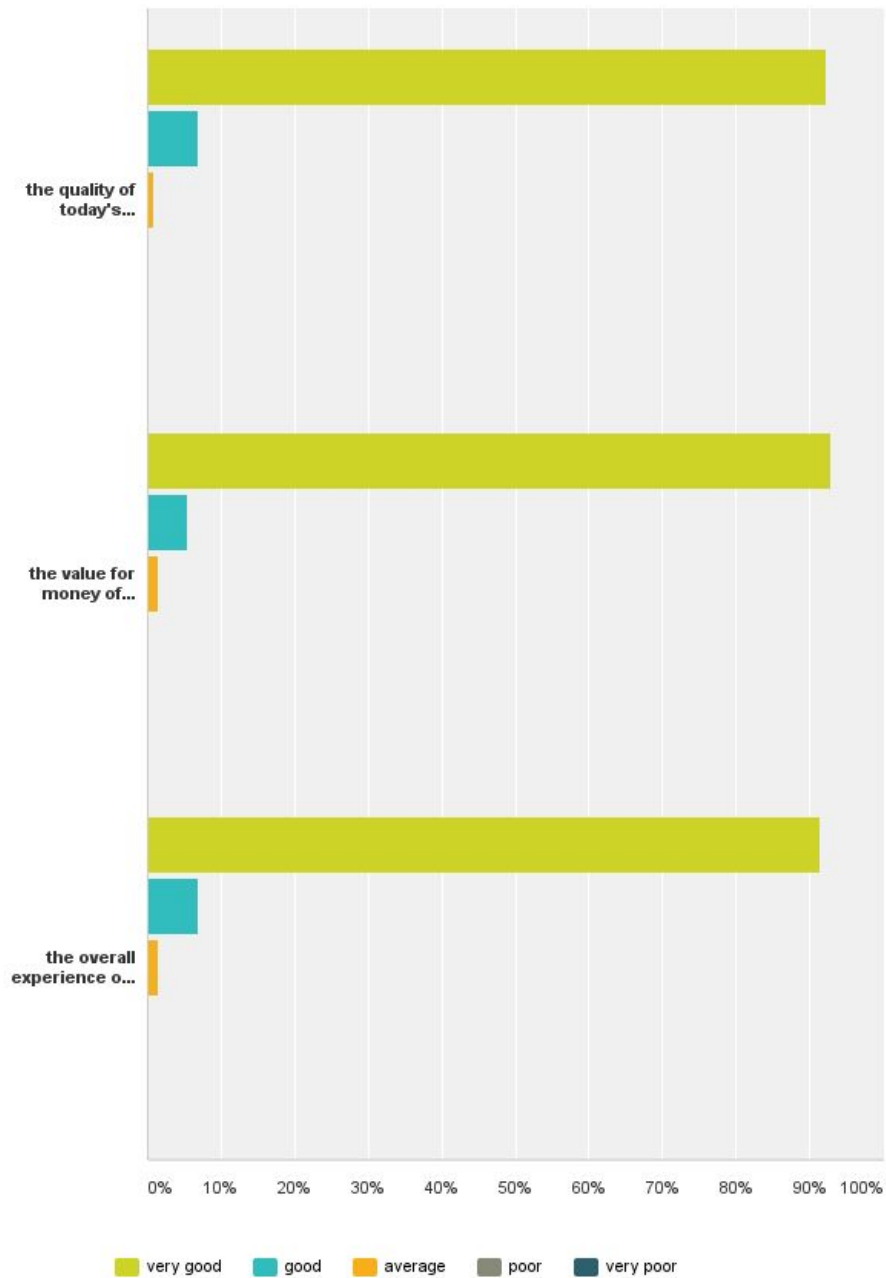




We asked our audiences to rate the quality of the performance, the value for money and they overall experience. Responses were overwhelmingly positive. with no one saying poor or very poor.

### Q4 How would you rate?

Answered: 130 Skipped: 0

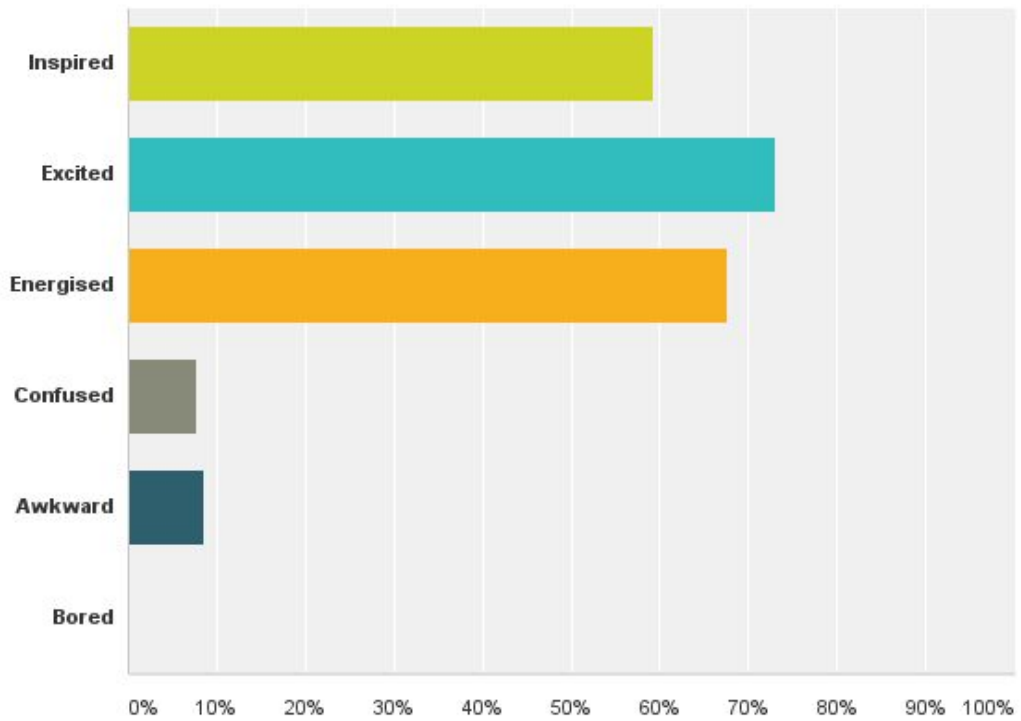




We also asked how the performance made people feel:

### Q3 How did the performance make you feel?

Answered: 130 Skipped: 0



Looking to the future we wanted to know what sort of events people would like to see in the future. Not surprisingly, given what people had just seen, there was a big demand for dance. There is also a demand for things to happen in people's home towns. There is otherwise an eclectic range which is hard to categorize. The responses are listed as appendix 1.



other than the immediate questionnaire we have received additional positive feedback from people who attended. We asked community representatives what the most memorable Plugged In event was in the past year and 64% stated Back of the Bus with one person saying,

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

## Challenges

This project brought a number of challenges, some minor and some more significant. Some of the logistical challenges were inevitable and relatively easy to overcome. The more significant challenge was selling the show and generating audiences.

The show was by no means a sell out. The weekday afternoon shows being the most challenging. We were selling something very different that most of the team had not actually seen other than short video clips. The show did come highly recommended but remained tricky to explain.

We commissioned posters and flyers which, in hindsight, did not convey the humour in the work. Less serious visuals may have made the publicity more accessible to reluctant audiences.

When flyering and talking to people we gained a lot of enthusiasm from people who assured us that they would come but failed to get over the hurdle of phoning or attending the box office to actually get a ticket. If we had had the ability to sell and issue a ticket out in the field we would have been able to sell a significant number of additional seats.



Some towns were easier than others and it depended on who we had on the ground. Nelson and Colne, core Plugged In venues, both proved challenging in getting audiences with little buy in from the staff at the ACE Centre or the Colne Muni. Accrington and Burnley, where we have little direct contact were well attended by comparison.



## Appendix 1

### Other events respondents would like to see

exhibitions, similar unusual performers, promenade play, any venue, especially one off

shadow theatre, large scale outdoor

plays, more dancing on moving things, dancing on trains

more drama in blackburn

more dance in lancashire

more dance, live outdoor theatre

all performing arts in wyre

dance shows

art, installation, live dance, accrington, burnley

opera, ballet, contemporary, comic, ossy civic, accrington town hall, on the buses :)

all art making use of our heritage including buildings!

dance, theatre, music, art, anywhere

anything!

Matthew Bourne or any other contemporary pieces in Blackburn King Georges Hall

more dance, theatre, storytelling, circus Blackburn/Darwen The Bureau

more events like this, that are a bit different than normal shows in Blackburn and Darw

acting/singing in the swimming pool

interested in all areas of art

open minded

more of this kind of thing!

family, dance, drama

music, live mic poetry, craft at craft & crumpets in Accrington

juggling and fire dancing in the autumn

any kinds of performance, drama, comedy

music, poetry, theatre in Blackburn/Accrington

unusual theatre

more dance/theatre in Preston or Blackburn

music, singing, dancing, drama or a combination of these

more dance

more dance performances

more dance

live music

open air cinema in the park

more music and dance

participatory arts engaging with all communities, disengaged audiences, in Nelson

live art everywhere!

more dance!

Events with humour like tonight!

more dance

any original performance, anywhere

more dance

poetry readings / modern dance, local style dancing

dance comedy east lincs

Rock music events

Any kind of art

This show again, anywhere local

more stuff in unusual places, dance

more performance art, more loud in libraries, more dance, theatre, food art events,  
everything, anything

dance / music east lincs pendle

Dance, music

more of this company. Funny stuff! More dance in Blackburn  
art exhibitions, dance shows, music shows, theatre shows  
more things in unusual spaces  
any musicals/comedy  
musicals/dance  
singing performances, local stories. Performing darwen stories  
drama, dance, family shows at Darwen Library Theatre  
open top bus art/theatre. Art in supermarkets  
more dance in dlt  
loads of different things in blackburn  
more new writing/devised theatre in unusual spaces like on the top deck of a bus and  
in Darwen Library Theatre  
other drama pieces using local buildings like churches, inaccessible to the public  
spaces (places we aren't allowed to go in!) The run down dance hall in Blackburn  
brought to life?  
drama/dance shows in places inaccessible to the public  
storytelling, anywhere close  
more dance, theatre, puppetry, storytelling in Blackburn (at The Bureau!) in waves  
before it is demolished or abseiling off the side of the town hall!  
outdoor theatre  
more dance/site specific  
dance, drama, live score to film, in bacup/anywhere!  
dance everywhere / site specific  
Just more stuff everywhere!  
more dance!  
More of this out of the box work!  
dance, visual and audio art  
More small performance spaces in lancashire  
more dance

more wonderful performances in unusual places

theatre/drama/music in unexpected places/in the middle of town

Dance/theatre on the new train to Manchester

more dance!

Samba/drumming/ dance in the town/streets/theatre/ the x43 bus!