NEWS RELEASE EMBARGOED UNTIL 7pm on Thursday 3 May 2018

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| Dance artists sought to create new shows for rural audiences * A second three-year Rural Touring Dance Initiative 2018-2021 launches tonight at The Place, London
* A £10,000 commission on offer for UK based companies to create new work
* A second £10,000 to be offered to a Wales based artist or company to create a new work
* Funds up to £5,000 for 6 companies to adapt existing work to tour rural areas
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**The second phase of a scheme to improve access to dance in rural communities has been launched this evening with a call out to artists interested in creating or developing work for village halls.** Rural Touring Dance Initiative 2 is a partnership between the National Rural Touring Forum (NRTF) and The Place, Take Art and China Plate. **Dance is underrepresented on the rural touring circuit and the partnership is seeking to increase opportunities for rural audiences to experience the art form.**

Having been granted a second major award from Arts Council England Strategic Touring programme and a new award from Arts Council Wales, the partnership is able to offer offering two commissions of £10,000 to dance companies to make a new show for rural touring, one of which must be based in Wales. There are also a limited number of grants of up to £5,000 for artists with existing shows to adapt them for rural touring.

Speaking about the call out, Ralph Lister, Director, NRTF’s Rural Touring Dance Initiative, said “The partners are excited about building on the successes of the first 3 years and delighted that there will be a stronger presence in Wales. This development demonstrates that the project is working and a broader base of support will strengthen its sustainability beyond 2021”.

This is the second phase of a project that has already seen Ben Wright’s bgroup commissioned to create P*oint of Echoes,* and a number of companies to adapt existing works. **Speaking about the experience of rural touring after participating in phase one, Luca Silvestrini,** Artistic Director of Luca Silvestrini’s Protein said “We are in a state of bliss. I’ve never experienced dancers and crew being more satisfied and wanting to do more”.

Rural Touring Dance Initiative 2 follows an overwhelmingly positive response to the first phase of the project from participating rural touring schemes and promoters, with 93% of promoters reporting an increased interest in promoting dance and 100% of touring schemes reporting that the RTDI increased their interest in programming dance. Rural touring is a growing sector of the UK’s arts industry with NRTF figures indicating that audience numbers attending shows in village halls and at outdoor rural events have increased 26% since 2006/7.

**Companies interested in applying should visit** [**www.theplace.org.uk**](http://www.theplace.org.uk) **for further information**

Notes to editors

**Founded in 1997, the NRTF is a member-led organisation that works to deliver high quality art experiences that strengthen communities, providing the rural touring network with training, information and networking services as** well as promoting better understanding of the rural touring network through research and advocacy. TheNRTF has identified a paucity of dance on the rural touring circuit and the development of a dance project is evident in its business plan. As a result of a fruitful relationship that has developed with The Place and a successful dance showcase at the New Directions Conference 2014, curated in partnership with China Plate, there is momentum to develop dance and rural touring - 89% of conference attenders scored the dance showcase highly or very highly. Through its members the NRTF can access a huge rural touring circuit with over 2,000 promoters. Individual rural touring schemes will play an integral role in the successful roll out of the project.

[**The Place**](http://www.theplace.org.uk/)has been a driving force for contemporary dance in the UK for 45 years. The Place is unique and is comprised of; a training organisation, a producing and receiving theatre, a home for a national touring company and a hub for hundreds of independent artists. Our artist development department provides professional development, training, residencies, commissioning and producing support for dance artists at each stage of their career. Having developed a relationship with the NRTF and after attending the New Directions Conference there is an understanding, excitement and new commitment to supporting dance artists and the dance sector to engage with and take advantage of rural touring opportunities.

China Plate is an independent theatre studio that works with artists, venues, festivals and funders to challenge the way performance is made, who it’s made by and who gets to experience it. Launched by Ed Collier and Paul Warwick in 2006, the company is currently collaborating with Caroline Horton, Chris Thorpe / Rachel Chavkin, Contender Charlie, Dan Jones, Sarah Punshon, Rachel Bagshaw, Urielle Klein-Mekongo, Inspector Sands, Joan Clevillé, David Edgar, Katie Lyons / Ella Grace and Ben Wright. China Plate are Associate Producers at Warwick Arts Centre where they develop and commission new work, Artistic Associates at the New Wolsey Theatre where they are Directors of PULSE Festival, Programmers of New Directions (the NRTF showcase) and Programme Consultants for Hull City of Culture 2017 (Back to Ours Festival). They are producers of innovative development programmes including The Darkroom, The Optimists (producer training), The First Bite and Bite Size Festivals and the NRTF Rural Touring Dance Initiative.

Over the last decade [**Take Art**](http://www.takeart.org/) has hosted the Somerset county dance agency, supporting the infrastructure for the development and promotion of professional dance in Somerset.  It has also run a rural touring scheme since 1987 and the services have worked and gained experience together. Take Art was the lead county dance agency in Up Close, the first south west rural touring dance project in partnership with Dance South West in 2007. Its hands on experience of and commitment to dance and rural touring at a local level provides the partnership with a grounded perspective.

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people’s lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2015 and 2018, we plan to invest £1.1 billion of public money from government and an estimated £700 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

*The Rural Touring Dance Initiative is a partnership project led by The National Rural Touring Forum with The Place, China Plate and Take Art. The project is funded by Arts Council England through its Strategic Touring Fund.*