



**Signed Performances In Theatre**

# NEWS

Registered Charity No. 1038247

Autumn 2003 Issue 34

[www.spit.org.uk](http://www.spit.org.uk)

## DEAF FOCUS GROUP

We are delighted to announce a grant of £5,000 from The Platinum Trust which will enable SPIT to continue and develop its Deaf Focus Group (DFG) over the next two years.

The DFG is made up of Deaf and Hard of Hearing theatre-goers, who "check out" and report back on theatres and shows they have been to. We would like more volunteers to join the group, especially from those living outside London. Please contact SPIT for more information.

Thank you to DFG members who have been busy over the summer, we've had reports back on *Motherland* at Jackson's Lane, *The Lady from the Sea* at the Almeida, *Hobson's Choice* at the Young Vic, *Richard III* at the Globe Theatre and *Cats* at Edinburgh Playhouse (full feedback in the next issue).

The biggest event in July had to be *Grease* at the Victoria Palace in London's West End attracting a sign language audience of 220 on a sunny day in July. It was reported that at times the bar of the Theatre resembled a Deaf Club and true to form most deaf people stood around signing during the interval until the lights were flashed to take them back to their seats for the second half.

*"Really enjoyed it! One of my favourites" "Fantastic show!" "Donna performed brilliantly" commented DFG members.*

This great success was organised by Sgnaway, who promise many more West End shows for 2004.

## BSL/ Captioning Debate continues

Recently in **SPIT News**, we have been reporting the continuing debate about the essential need for BSL interpreted performances when captioned performances seem to be pulling bigger audiences.

SPIT is committed to supporting both forms of accessing theatre so that all Deaf and Hard of Hearing theatre goers can enjoy as many performances as possible.

However, more and more people are saying that they want to see new and innovative ways of involving an interpreter in the process of staging a show.

Do you have any ideas of how theatres could involve an interpreter more imaginatively? We'd like to hear from you if you do.

SPIT are currently planning a seminar to talk about ways of interpreting theatre - which will include staging - so if you think there are things that theatres could do better or differently, then we'd like to know! Contact us and we'll include your thoughts and ideas in the next issue.

*Cath Hunter, Chair, SPIT*

# A FULL-DAY SPIT WORKSHOP ON DEAF AWARENESS

Festival Theatre, Edinburgh, 29 September  
West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds, 27 November  
Hippodrome, Birmingham, 16 March

The workshop is led by our experienced trainer John Wilson, SPIT board member and Deaf Arts Officer for SHAPE London.

*"I would highly recommend the course to anyone"*

## What is the workshop about?

- \* How to communicate with Deaf patrons
- \* How to create a "Deaf-friendly" environment
- \* Booking a BSL Interpreter & understanding their needs

## Who should attend?

Ideally, all staff. The workshop is of particular interest to members of staff who either communicate directly with Deaf patrons (e.g. FOH, Ushers, Box Office), those who currently organise BSL Interpreted Performances, or those who want to know how to begin organising them. (e.g. Theatre programmers, Education, Marketing).

*"..exactly what I wanted, needed and expected"*

## What will I get out of it?

You will learn about the issues that Deaf patrons face when they enter a theatre; you will learn the necessary skills to welcome Deaf patrons to your theatre; you will receive guidelines on how best to prepare for a sign language interpreted performance; you will be given the chance to ask questions specifically related to you and your theatre's needs.

## How much does it cost?

£50 to SPIT members £70 to non-SPIT members (Lunch is not included)

## How do I book?

Fax or email SPIT (contact details on page 4).

## No Clash Diary

**Avoid clashing with another venue offering a SLIP on the same night as you; use SPIT's National No-Clash Diary to check and register dates for your SLIPs.**

***Remember - it only works if you use it!***

**Up to date listings can be seen at  
[www.spit.org.uk/search.asp](http://www.spit.org.uk/search.asp)**

## Theatre News

We have several new SPIT members since the last issue:

**Soho Theatre**, London

**The Dukes**, Lancaster

**Trading Faces Theatre Company**

**Edinburgh Festival Theatre**

**Salisbury Playhouse**

**The Octagon Theatre Bolton** is pleased to announce new funding from Bolton's Community Chest fund to revive their extensive (sign language interpreted performances (SLIPs) programme this autumn, with interpreter Kyra Pollitt. Contact Ticket Sales/ minicom (bookings & information) 01204 520681 or [www.octagonbolton.co.uk](http://www.octagonbolton.co.uk)

The reopened **Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse** are also offering a new programme of SLIPs this autumn. Box Office: 0151 709 4776 Minicom: 0151 709 0534 E: [boxoffice@everymanplayhouse.com](mailto:boxoffice@everymanplayhouse.com)

**Salisbury Playhouse**, launches a SLIP for each mainstage show for the first time this autumn, with interpreter Ann McAllister. Tel 01722 320333 Fax 01722 421991 or

[Eboxoff@salisburyplayhouse.com](mailto:Eboxoff@salisburyplayhouse.com)

**When Snow Falls** is a fun festive show for children over 3 years and their families. It is a poetic tale of friendship and discovery, full of the magic of winter. *T'peers out of the window – face pressed up against the glass – and wishes. What if it snowed? Twishess so hard that sometimes it hurts... Then one day, things start to look just a little bit different...*

When *Show Falls* is an adventure of two friends, T and Midge who explore a fantastical snowy landscape filled with icebergs and polar animals. Their imaginings are illustrated by the fantastical spirit, Chill, who interprets their voices into British Sign Language. The tale unfolds through their individual stories told using music, movement and poetic text. With fully integrated sign language interpretation, this show is accessible to Deaf and hearing audiences alike.

When *Show Falls* is produced by Half Moon Young People's Theatre, one of London's leading theatres for young people. This show follows the success of *Tuna Git* and *Eclipse: A Tale for Winter*. It tours nationally from 6<sup>th</sup> October 2003 – 4<sup>th</sup> January 2004.

## Letters...

*From an interpreter*

I was wondering if SPIT has a policy on the number of interpreters per performance.

For example, an interpreter who is booked for a job for approximately 3 hours with a 15 minute break in between would not agree to doing the task on their own. However it amazes me then, when I hear that the same interpreters will agree to doing a theatre performance on their own!

What about the theory that once you have interpreted for between 20 and 30 minutes, the production deteriorates therefore you are NOT giving a good service?

I would be pleased to hear SPIT's views on this.

*Let us know what you think, to the usual address!*

## BE AMAZED-D, SURPRISE-D, WOW-D ... BE \*\*\* DAZE-D!

### Deaf Arts in South East England

Dazed - you will be ... that Deaf Arts can & will happen in the region. NOW is a brilliant time to be part of Sign Language driven Arts Development and Arts Access for Deaf People.

If you're a venue, a company or a Deaf Artist living in the South East, it's time to recognise British Sign Language, access for deaf people in the arts and applaud brilliant Deaf Arts as it emerges.

My name is Lisa Mills - I'll be in touch soon - to find out what you do, what you know and what you can plan next. Tell me before I get to you!

Email me:

dazed@honeybeetheatre.com

## TO CAPTION, OR NOT TO CAPTION...

*The debate on the role of SLIPs and captioned performances still rages. Terry Ruane makes a personal contribution:*

"Many theatres around the country appear to be under the mistaken impression that captioned performances can replace SLIPs and provide 'access for all' including those who go to SLIPs. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth, nor do captions give a 'more truthful' interpretation of a performance, as has been claimed. Captions only give you the *words*, they tell you nothing about the way an actor says a line, nor do they convey an actor's interpretation of a part, or the director's reading of a play. It is ironic that people think they are getting more from captions when in many cases they are getting far less.

However, the simple truth is that Deaf people need a choice of *both*. Captions are useful for those who want the words and nothing more. It has often been said that a caption board gives a 'dead' interpretation without the feeling and expression that can be conveyed by a properly qualified and experienced theatre sign language interpreter with performance skills. On a more positive note, plays by Shakespeare and Oscar Wilde, for example, depend on their *English* content and many feel better access to this kind of work is through captions.

On the other hand, who wants to see a *musical* of all things captioned? Many deaf theatregoers want to be able to follow the lyrics in time to the music and get not only the mood and expression, but the overall feeling of the show.

The Disability Rights Commission is now starting to take an interest in what is happening in theatres around the country. I believe that once this has been investigated, theatres will find that they are required to provide *both* captions and signed performances. In the meantime, watch this space!"

*SPIT would like to hear readers' views on this issue. All letters, e-mail etc to the usual contact address*

## ACTORS WANTED!

Are you a disabled actor? Do you want to know how to be successful in auditions? We're offering **you** the unmissable opportunity to perfect your audition technique and acquire new skills.

If you're 17 or over, you may be eligible for a place on Big House Theatre Company's audition technique course which runs from Monday 13<sup>th</sup> to Friday 17<sup>th</sup> October at The Contact Theatre in Manchester. You'll have the chance to learn the secrets of television and theatre audition technique in a completely accessible environment. All accommodation and travel costs will be provided for successful applicants. Send your contact details, why you would like to come on the course and a brief summary of your experience to the address below. Closing date: 12<sup>th</sup> September 2003.

Audition Technique Workshop, Big House Theatre Company,  
242 Clarendon Street, Manchester M15 5AB  
or e-mail us: [kathryn@bighousetheatre.freemove.co.uk](mailto:kathryn@bighousetheatre.freemove.co.uk)

## JO-JO'S JOURNEY

*Roberta Hammond, Education & Community Manager at Cambridge Arts Theatre, talks about the creation of a workshop presentation exploring integrated performance in English and British Sign Language.*

Cambridge Arts Theatre has been grappling with integrated theatre for six years now. Every August we run a deaf and hearing summer school where, for two weeks, young people aged 13-18 work together to try and push the boundaries of mainstream theatre. When I discovered that there was a deaf character in *Multiplex* by Christopher William Hill I just had to get some actors together to workshop some of the themes and characters from the play. We spent a week at Easter experimenting with different ways to integrate and interpret monologues and scenes inspired by *Multiplex*. The cast were particularly focused on brainstorming ways to present interpreters on the stage or do away with them all together while still working in two languages.

*Jo-Jo's Journey* provided us with a very exciting opportunity to challenge the way hearing audiences think about integrated and deaf theatre (if in fact, they think about it at all) through the eyes and talents of young deaf and hearing performers. The project was in partnership with the National Deaf Children's Society who provided accommodation, meals and a fun trip to the London Eye, when we all went to the Royal National Theatre to perform during their Shell Connections Festival.

The performance and Q&A session caused quite a stir. It was wonderful to see over 150 people so animated and excited about the concept of integrated theatre. Although the debate was heated, I think it was wonderful to be given such a high profile platform to discuss such important issues. I would particularly like to thank Suzy, Graham, Adriani and Helen Prosser at the National Theatre for their enthusiasm and support for the project.

Deaf cast member Sarah Clark, aged 17, is keen on opportunities like these:

*"Without them, I don't think I would be where I am now from an acting perspective because drama and theatre is marginally a hearing world which is difficult for deaf people to get involved in - whatever their level of deafness. The confidence I have now comes from me taking part in the Arts Theatre's summer schools and projects like this one."*

Luke Frewin deaf, aged 16

*"Communication with the interpreters was good. I tried my best to communicate with hearing too. Everybody was happy. Liked working on a stage. Enjoyed working hard. tired at the end of the day but very satisfying. Good for confidence and good for the future, my cv."*



CALOUSTE  
GULBENKIAN  
FOUNDATION

This issue of SPIT News cost £1.00. SPIT relies on donations from individuals, trusts and foundations for half of its income. Please support us. All donations large and small are vital.

For more information on how you could support SPIT please contact us.

## Keep in touch!

To join SPIT's free mailing list, simply send us your name, address and contact details. If you received this issue by post, you are already on our database!

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