

Integrated signing at the Shed



Chicken Shed Theatre Christmas Show, Laraine Krantz

Sarah Ward, Youth Theatre member of the Chicken Shed Theatre Company, has written this article to highlight the company's work and commitment to BSL in performance.

I was diagnosed as being deaf at a very young age when they tested me at the same time as my older sister, Lizzie, who is profoundly deaf. We both joined *Chicken Shed* in the 90s, which changed our outlook on life completely.

Chicken Shed has always strived to make theatre accessible to everyone. They love sign language and have used it in their productions wherever possible. Last summer, in 2004, *Chicken Shed* asked me if I wanted to be a Never Native in their Christmas show, *Peter Pan*. This was an amazing opportunity, as it wasn't a spoken part; I was going to be signing along with eleven other cast members. I was going to be signing what some of the Lost Children were saying. Others were signing for the Pirates and all the other parts in the show. Everything that was spoken was interpreted in sign language.

Charlotte Moulton-Thomas, who is deaf herself, translated the script into sign language, and then taught the cast everything they had to sign. For some people, it was the first time they had signed, so it took a lot of time.

Charlotte had a lot of confidence in us and helped us by going through the script, learning all the signs. Further into the rehearsals we got tapes that had the script spoken.

On the opening night, we kept running through lines backstage, and urging each other on. By the time the first act started, my nerves were at the highest point, but they disappeared once I was on the stage. The signing went really well, and the others cued me, which really helped. The atmosphere backstage was very inclusive (as usual) and very encouraging. The first show was over and it went really well!

Members of the audience who were deaf or hard of hearing were able to come to any performance, as they had full access. It was great to bump into them after the show. I was really happy that they were able to access the show completely.

I've gained so much from the experience, my signing skills became really good, I felt very confident on the stage and I made a lot of new friends along the way. It was a fantastic experience and certainly one that I will never forget.

The integrated signing was amazing and *Chicken Shed* really wants to keep this going. So this Christmas, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* will have Sign Language totally integrated again and I'm looking forward to being one of the signing creatures!

***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* runs from Wednesday 20th November to Saturday 14th January. You can find out more about *Chicken Shed Theatre Company* at their website www.chickenshed.org.uk**

Shape Theatre Access Working Group



disabled and deaf people
and the arts



For many years, London's Theatres and Shape have worked together to make services accessible to deaf and disabled people.

In September, Shape and Audiences London hosted a conference, supported by the Society of London Theatre (SOLT) that represented an important staging post in the progress towards the shared aim of equal access. The idea was that Disability Organisations and Theatres shared experiences and work together to find solutions. This was a chance to try and get everyone together talking about access and was a great success.

The topics covered included:

- Ticket pricing and concessionary rates
- The relationships between producers and service providers
- What is 'reasonable adjustment' as per DDA
- Making the most of available resources
- How to make it easier for people to book
- Quality control of service providers

The action points that came out of the event include:

- SOLT guides – hopefully these will become a standard and universal document for the whole industry that can lay down some firm guidelines on issues like pricing
- The report from the event will lay out where the West End is in terms of access currently, highlight what can be done about the key issues and build on the progress made that day.
- Groups will continue to meet in order to take the topics further and develop some actionable strategies.

Watch this space! SPIT News will report on progress and action in future issues.

In the meantime, if you would like a copy of the report or more information, contact

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New logo to show where BSL is available

A brand new *British Sign Language (BSL)* logo was launched at the start of this year's Learn to Sign Week, run by the *British Deaf Association*. The BDA's new logo has hands to show that access is available through BSL.

"We are delighted to launch our new BSL logo that can be displayed in the windows of shops and other public services," says Doug Alker, the BDA Chair. "It means that hearing people who can use BSL will be able to advertise their skills, rather than focussing on the fact that Deaf people cannot hear. It will also promote BSL as a language, and hopefully encourage more people to think about learning to sign."

If you would like to download the logo for your venue or organisation's use, visit:

www.learntosign.org.uk/bslsticker.htm

New online service from National Disability Arts Forum

ArtsAccessUK

In order to support arts organisations that have become more accessible, and to encourage disabled people to use the services on offer, the NDAF is establishing Arts Access UK, a free online database of access details and event information from arts venues throughout the UK. **Go to: www.artsaccessuk.org**

It's not just about booking the interpreter...

Terry Ruane shares with SPIT News some of the backroom planning and negotiations for BSL interpreted performances for the West End:

In a way I think I work in the most difficult area for Signed Performances – the West End. There are some fundamental differences in the way shows are produced and presented, which people do not always understand.

When we work in the regions like Crawley, Bromley and Southend the process is straightforward, as the Theatre simply book us and all we have to do is market the show and put the interpreter on stage. That is the sort of experience Theatre interpreters have all over the country.

In the West End, the Theatre itself has no responsibility for the show. Producers rent the Theatre which provides building-based services but the show and the ticket sales belong to the Producer. The Producer is usually also responsible for signed performances which are a stage-based not building-based service. This means if you come to me with a request from schools for *Blood Brothers* or *Scrooge*, for example, I know the

individual producer and not the Theatre is my starting point; in fact I often find I have absolutely nothing to do with the Theatre itself!

This will continue in the next issue.

Theatresign's forthcoming signed performances in the West End:

Scrooge starring Tommy Steele at the **London Palladium** on Thursday 8th December

The Old Vic's pantomime **Aladdin** starring Ian McKellen on Friday 20th January

Mary Poppins on Saturday May 6th at 2.30pm at the **Prince Edward Theatre**

The Lion King at the **Lyceum Theatre** on Sunday 14 May at 3pm

Chicago at the **London Adelphi Theatre** on Saturday June 10th at 3pm

Billy Elliot at the **Victoria Palace Theatre** on Saturday 14 July at 3pm

Details of these performances and ticket prices can be found in the listings, or visit www.theatresign.com.

Snapshot

The National Theatre has launched a Text List for exclusive special offers and updates for captioned and sign language interpreted performances. To join, text CAPTION to 07950 08 08 04.

Unicorn Theatre has moved to its new theatre at More London SE1 between London and Tower Bridge. The new box office general number is 08700 534 534, www.unicorntheatre.com.



Compagnie 111, Aglaé Bory

The 28th London International Mime Festival (LIMF) runs from 11-29 January 2006. Look out for its eye-popping visual theatre.

A full programme & brochure available at www.mimefest.co.uk or tel 020 7637 5661.

All Change!

Sarah Sills will be stepping down as SPIT's Administrator of 10 years to work full time in education. *Sarah Hunt*, former Chair of SPIT and now Deputy Director, Sales & Marketing, National Theatre, said: "It was such a pleasure to work with you over these years. I found your advice and support immensely helpful. The fact that SPIT is alive and well today is due in no small part to your dedication, consistency and commitment. I wish you well for the future."

Interviews are taking place as we go to press. *Sarah Sills* says that "...the response to advertisements has been tremendous and I am confident that we will find a dynamic new administrator who will be able to develop and strengthen SPIT as the lead national body for promoting BSL interpreted mainstream theatre."

Donations to SPIT

A big thank you to those who sent individual donations after our appeal in the last SPIT News Update (September). Staffordshire based 'Music In Motion' awarded SPIT a £500 grant toward costs of a Deaf Awareness Workshop, BSL Course and Deaf Focus Group Tickets in the Birmingham area. Further funds for projects were also received from the *Kobler Trust*.

We Need Your Support

SPIT News has been a free publication available on request for 10 years – but now we need your help! We rely on donations from individuals, trusts and foundations for over half of its income. These donations are vital.

Please consider supporting SPIT by sending your Donation, large or small, today. Cheques should be made payable to SPIT. SPIT is a registered Charity.



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 the list!

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Copy deadline for SPIT News no. 42 is 31 January 2006

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