



NEWSLETTER

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AUSTRALIAN
THEATRE
OF THE
DEAF

JUKEBOX

Our new school show *JUKEBOX* kicked off at the start of this year. The 4-5 week busy rehearsal period paid off as everyone enjoyed working on the production. Our very own Gillian Minervini wrote the show and Mike Canfield directed it. We also had guests from outside the Company involved with the development of the production - William Forsythe who choreographed the dances for the songs and Philippa Playford who did a wonderful job designing a brilliant set - a huge jukebox!



The show has travelled to schools in the Sydney metro and outer regional areas for the last 2 months and will continue to do so until the end of 1997.

JUKEBOX is proving to be a hit with school audiences, ranging from late primary to early secondary. The show focuses on increasing awareness of Deaf-related issues based on personal experiences of the actors as well as portraying a positive image through some brilliant song signing. Audiences are given an opportunity to learn to sign a popular song. *JUKEBOX* is a dynamic show using a blend of music, comedy, dance and visual theatre.

SHOW AND TELL

Rehearsals have just started for this new show especially designed for our very young audiences - Preschool to Year 2. Sofya Gollan (an old time Toddie) is directing it and it is good to have her back with the Company. The actors Robert, Nina and Medina will bring a famous Australian children's story to life as well as give an opportunity for the children to learn to sign a well known song. *SHOW AND TELL* is expected to "hit the road" in late April.

DEAF DRAMA WEEKEND

We have just had our first of 2 Deaf Drama Weekends planned for this year. A total of 20 children (aged 7-12 yrs) participated from different backgrounds to join together for what was an active non-stop weekend. We had Deaf children - both signing and oral, hearing impaired children and a couple of CODA's (Children of Deaf Adults).

On Friday night we ate our first meal together, introduced ourselves, played games and activities and got to know one another.

Saturday was a busy day, scheduled with circus acts (juggling, etc.), 'working together' activities, visual communication exercises and acrobatic skills. At night after dinner we played more games until bedtime.

Up early on Sunday morning (eek!) to do some more circus acts, followed by a session of learning basic dance steps. After lunch our creativity was 'put to the test' to make up stories visually and we finished off with playing a visual version of the game Pictionary.

Certificates of completion were presented to the 'little graduates' and then parents came at 5pm to take them home. Phew!

The weekend was held at the North Rocks Institute for Deaf and Blind Children. Mike, Pam, and the actors stayed through the whole weekend ensuring things went without a



hitch! Apart from ATOD leading some of the sessions we invited some guest teachers - Sofya Gollan (acrobatics), Louise de Beuzeville (circus skills) and Helen Dallas (dance). It was a pleasure to have them with us.

The weekend was a big one for all and we are sure that the children went home with new knowledge, new friends and plenty of stories to tell!!

VICTORIAN/TASMANIAN TOUR

The actors will pack their bags again soon for a tour down south of Australia. They head straight to Victoria on 29th April for 3 weeks presenting our new show *JUKEBOX*, organised by the Victorian Arts Council.

Then, to Tasmania for a 2 week stay, presenting *JUKEBOX* and our community show *HANDS & TALES* to general audiences in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie. Participants at the National Deafness

Conference in Hobart will have the opportunity to see us in **HANDS & TALES**. While in Tasmania, we will be joined by our Artistic Director Mike Canfield who will be the MC for the show and Pam Spicer,



our interpreter. We look forward to meeting old and new faces from the Australian Deaf Community at the Conference.

Finally, the actors travel back to Victoria to continue with **JUKEBOX** in schools for two weeks. This marks the end of their seven week tour and they will arrive back home to Sydney in mid June.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The Australian Youth Foundation held a conference at Sydney University and invited us to perform **JUKEBOX** to their participants from all over Australia. It was held after their dinner and turned out to be a successful and enjoyable evening for all (including the actors!). We received a letter of thanks which included the following comment... *"Through their professional and enthusiastic performance, Caroline, Medina, Robert and Nina touched us and made us laugh with them. They enabled us, as hearing people, to catch a glimpse of what it's like to be deaf in a hearing world and hopefully our attitudes will have been changed by the experience..."* This certainly proves that the message portrayed through the show **JUKEBOX** is reaching out to our audiences!!

Telstra held a launch of the new program that provides free TTYs to Deaf Australians. Through the launch we presented an excerpt from **JUKEBOX** - a short skit along with signing a song relating to TTY's!!

The Powerhouse Museum held a Communications Theme Week in March for high school students Yrs 7 - 12. A variety of events were conducted by various guest artists and teachers. Mike Canfield presented a workshop session everyday during that week to all students who visited the museum. He demonstrated



ed a story in our very own visual style, visual vernacular, told of the history of ATOD, had the students up on their feet copying facial and body expressions and even had some students volunteering in a few exercises. The organiser of this event commented on what a wonderful and worthwhile session he gave.

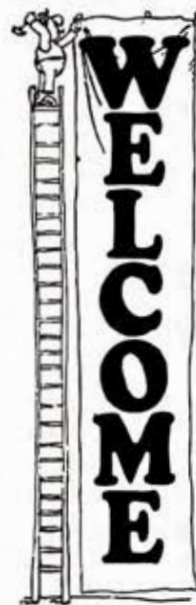
WORKSHOPS

The demand for our workshops is growing rapidly! Here are a few that have been held:

- A full day workshop in Visual Communication and Theatre was held for 'The Red Herring's' - a womens' theatre group based in Blacktown.
- Half day workshops at various high schools, eg: Our Lady of Lebanon, Harris Park; Pendle Hill High School and Scots College, Bondi Junction.

NEW STARS!!!

1995 bid farewell to actors Damien Walters and Lisa Mills who moved on to do other things.



Again, auditions were held to find two new replacements. We are pleased to have Nina Mishriky and Medina Sumovic, both from Sydney as our new energetic additions to the company. Read on to get to know them....

NINA: All her life Nina has loved art. At school she did well in art gaining top marks especially in drawing and painting. She finished her HSC in 93 and enrolled at TAFE doing Associated Diploma in

Fine Art and especially enjoyed doing sculpture. In 1995 she commenced a hairdressing apprenticeship and worked in 2 big salons. Now that she is working with ATOD, hairdressing is taking a back seat for a while! Nina was born in Sydney and is the only Deaf member in her family.

MEDINA: Medina comes from a deaf oral background and started meeting other Deaf people when she was 11 yrs. She completed her HSC and then worked as a teacher's aide in a bi-lingual program at the Robert Reid Centre, North Rocks, for 4 years. Medina was also born in Sydney and her parents are from Yugoslavia.

NAME CHANGE

Theatre of the Deaf announces that we have legally changed our name to Australian Theatre of the Deaf (ATOD). We feel this change of name is more representative of our work on a national level and that we are the only professional Deaf theatre company in Australia.

AGM

ATOD held its AGM on Monday 1 April. The results of the Board elections are as follows: Brett Casey, Maria Hunter (Secretary), Marcia Girke (Deputy Chair), Jeremy Godwin, Anna Hruby, Anna Messariti, Jennifer Nicholls, Sharron Wilson and Mitzi Zaphir (Chair).

QUEENSLAND TOUR

We had another successful tour in mid Queensland with our show **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ANGELS** during Oct/Nov 95. The Queensland Arts Council were pleased to have us again and the show proved to be popular with kids and teachers alike. The actors performed a total of 100 shows to approx 14,400 people.

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TWO MEN AND A MOUSE

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