



N.S.W. Theatre of the Deaf

153 Dowling Street Potts Point NSW 2011 Tel (02) 357 1200

A HISTORY OF THE COMPANY

A deaf drama group was originally formed in 1973 by Mr. Nick Neary, a Welfare Officer with the New South Wales Adult Society who had previously worked with the British Deaf Drama Group. Mr. Neary worked mainly as the groups Administrator and in this capacity engaged Dr. Oliver Fiala to direct a production of 'PEER GYNT' which was presented at Newington College in November 1973 and later presented at various deaf centres.

In 1974 The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust brought the American National Theatre of the Deaf to Australia and a small group of deaf drama students were able to attend workshops conducted by Bernard Bragg of the American Company. Mr. Bragg also conducted workshops for deaf people in other states which aroused a great deal of interest in the possibilities of forming a deaf theatre Company in Australia.

Following the visit of the American Company Mr. Neary went to Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth to select people to attend the Summer School for deaf actors to be held in Waterford, Connecticut. Those chosen were Rae Gibson of Perth, John McRae from Melbourne and Nola Colefax from Sydney.

In 1975 Adam Salzer, who was on a Trainee Directors grant from The Australia Council, was appointed the Company's Artistic Director. In December the Company presented a specially devised production for the opening of the new Adult Deaf Society premises at Stanmore. This was followed by a childrens Christmas production - 'HOW THE CLOWN FOUND HIMSELF, HIS CAT AND THE CIRCUS' which was also presented at other deaf centres during 1976.

In November 1976 Mr. Salzer directed the Company's first major public production - 'KING LEAR' - for a four week season at the Seymour Centre.

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1977 was designated as a training year for the Company to study clown and mask techniques, mime, puppetry and movement. This culminated in a successful two weeks season of 'ROGUES AND CLOWNS'.

Throughout 1978 Mr. Salzer conducted acting classes for the Company using professional acting techniques. During the later part of the year the Company worked at the Australian Film and Television School where they recorded a selection of video inserts used in the production of 'FIVE FLIGHTS TO FREEDOM' which was very well received when presented at the Seymour Centre.

Also during 1978 the Company hosted the first National Deaf Theatre Seminar to be held in Australia. This was attended by deaf artists from Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales.

In January 1979 the New South Wales Theatre of the Deaf formed a professional Theatre in Education Company comprising three deaf artists: Nola Colefax, David London and Colin Allen and two hearing artists: Margaret Davis and Bryon Jones. This was not the first time deaf and hearing artists had worked together. Adam Salzer had also used hearing artists in 'KING LEAR' and 'FIVE FLIGHTS TO FREEDOM'. Mr. Salzer directed the first T.I.E. production, 'MY HOUSE IS YOUR CARBAGE BIN', which the Company introduced into Primary Schools with great success.

In April Mr. Salzer resigned as Artistic Director after leading the Company for over three years. His Successor, Ian Watson, wrote and directed the Company's second T.I.E. production, 'ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS' which was devised for High School students. In August the Company combined with The Griffin Theatre Company to present 'ALEX...OR THE AUTOMATIC TRIAL'.

In November a season of two one-act productions were presented at the Stables Theatre:- 'DOUBLE ACT' comprised an adult version of 'ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS' and 'A HISTORY IN SIX SIDES' which was the first time a member of the Company, David London, had presented a one-man show. Both 'ALEX...' and 'DOUBLE ACT' were highly praised by the critics and well received by the general public.

Throughout 1979 the part-time Company, under the direction

of the Company's Assistant Artistic Director, Nola Colefax, presented a number of productions at the Adult Deaf Society Theatre. These included:

'THE DREAMERS'	May 1979
'ANNUAL DEAF REVIEW'	July 79
'A SPORTS PLAY'	Jan 1980

In January 1980 Rosemarie Lenzo replaced Margaret Davis in the T.I.E. Company.

A special grant from The Australia Council Literature Board enabled the Company to engage Ingle Knight as Writer-in-Residence to devise and write two T.I.E. productions - 'THE SHSHSH JOURNEY' and 'THE UNHEARD WORLD OF JASPER LAWSON' both of which are now touring Primary and High Schools in the metropolitan area.

The concept of deaf and hearing actors working together, as originally conceived by Adam Salzer and nurtured by Ian Watson, has proved highly successful as is evident by the audience reaction to our T.I.E. an public performances.

The Company, under the auspices of The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust receive financial assistance fro The Australia Council (Theatre and Community Arts Boards) and the State Government - Premier's Department - Division of Cultural Activities.

Gareth Wilding Forbes.