

Theatre of the Deaf

153 Dowling St., Potts Point, N.S.W. 2011. 357 1200

The Theatre of the Deaf, based in Sydney, is Australia's premier professional deaf theatre company. The company started in the early 70's under the guidance of the Adult Deaf Society of NSW and especially through the efforts of one of its welfare workers, Mr Nick Neary, who had experience with Deaf Theatre in England.

In 1979, with the backing of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust and the Australia Council, the Theatre of the Deaf was launched as a fully professional theatre company. The company has continued to expand and develop working with: schools, community groups, in theatres and in film and television.

The company consists of Deaf and Hearing actors working together in a theatrical style which interlinks sign language, mime, visual communication, gesture and voice. This format has proved popular with both deaf and hearing audiences and is equally accessible to both.

The International Year of the Disabled persons in 1981 was an important year for the company. There were numerous community performances to mark the occasion including a performance of 'The Unheard World of Jasper Lawson' for HRH the Prince of Wales. Mrs Nola Colefax, founding member of the company and was then the Artistic Director, was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for her services to the deaf theatre.

The Theatre of the Deaf works mainly in schools in the Sydney metropolitan area and tours country areas regularly. To date we have performed in Tasmania, Victoria and the ACT. This year the company visited Adelaide as part of the Adelaide Festival Fringe.

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The Theatre of the Deaf has an ensemble of six actors who form two performing groups although they do work together in Hooligan's Hands our production for secondary schools.

David London, the company's senior actor has been with the Theatre of the Deaf since it was formed. Colin Allen, who also joined the company in 1979, recently spent a year in the USA studying with the National Theatre of the Deaf and working with the Fairmont Theatre of the Deaf while Carol Lee Aquiline and Ben Strout, the Artistic Director, have come to work with the company from the National Theatre of the Deaf, USA. Carol Lee Aquiline has since left the company to perform in Children of a Lesser God. Julie Marie Lyons, from Queensland, has become our first interstate member to replace Carol Lee.

In January, the Theatre of the Deaf ran a Summer School of Visual Theatre which was open to deaf and hearing actors around Australia. These workshops, which were sponsored by the Myer foundation, were a great success and it is planned to make them an annual event as currently there is no other way of obtaining training in this field.

The Theatre of the Deaf is a division of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. It is assisted by the Theatre Board and the Literature Board of the Australia Council, a statutory body of the Commonwealth Government and by the N.S.W. Government through the Division of Cultural Activities. Its major sponsors are Esso Australia Ltd., the Sydney City Council, the Potter Foundation and the Myer Foundation. The Theatre of the Deaf is a member of the Confederation of Australian Professional Performing Arts (CAPPA) Ltd. and the Educational Performing Arts Companies.