

THE NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF-----ARTISTIC AMBASSADORS

The most common idea that people have about the NSW Theatre of the Deaf is that it is for the Deaf and of little interest to the hearing community. This is not so; the Company is of the Deaf and by the Deaf and is of relevance to everyone. The NSW Theatre of the Deaf is an artistic ambassador for the Deaf which shows that the hearing world does not have a monopoly on creativity and artistic ability.

The NSW Theatre of the Deaf is the only professional deaf theatre group in Australia though there are amateur groups in most capital cities. The Company had its origin in the early seventies under the guidance of the Adult Deaf Society of NSW and most especially through the efforts of one of its Welfare Officers, Mr Nick Neary, a man with experience of deaf theatre in England.

In 1979, with the backing of the Australia Council and the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the Company was launched as a fully professional theatre company. From that time the Company has continued to develop, working in schools, with community groups, in theatres and even on television.

The Company consists of deaf and hearing actors working together in a theatrical form which encompasses sign language, mime, visual communication, gesture, music and voice. This format has proved very successful and the Company has been very popular with schools and with the general public.

At the moment the Company has five deaf actors and three hearing ones which makes it a large company by theatrical standards. Our actors are employed 12 months of the year unlike most companies who employ their actors on a contract per show basis. This makes our wages bill very high but as we are the only avenue of employment for deaf actors and because we work for most of the year, we think that it is worth it.

Although we present public shows in theatres around Sydney, funding problems have meant that we have had to cut back this year. We will however be mounting a show in the last week of October for the Women and Arts Festival. The show is called The Silent Words of Women and will be at Studio 228 in Forbes Street Darlinghurst from Wednesday 27 October to Saturday 30 October. Our next general production will be in February next year.

Most of our work this year has been in schools and we have travelled all through the metropolitan area and into quite a few country areas visiting schools. Most schools are so impressed by our work that they book us every year. Here are some comments from schools that we have visited.

" This was a very enlightening experience for the students. Apart from the theatrical enjoyment of the play, the girls went away with a deep awareness of the realities of being deaf in a hearing world" Brigidine College 27 March 1981

"Please come again because the girls want to know the company better. They liked the chance to see how deaf people communicate and they learned never again to tease deaf people."
St Bridget's College Marrickville 30 November 1981

"I think the company is invaluable as a theatre group and as a means of breaking down the barriers."

Sydney Girls High School

26 March 1982

"All the children were extremely interested (thus the excellent behaviour). The inclusion of the children at various stages kept them captivated. The 'silent' session after the performance worked well- the children were very interested in the sign language."

Bankstown North Primary

5 April 1982

The Company had a great year in 1981, IYDP. Highlights of the year include:

- * Performances at the Moomba Festival in Melbourne.
- * A tour of Tasmania in June/July.
- * The Company performed the Unheard World of Jasper Lawson in front of HRH The Prince of Wales at a celebration to mark IYDP.
- * Mrs Nola Colefax, Assistant Director of the Company, received the Order of Australia Medal for her services to deaf theatre.
- * The Company performed in over 400 schools to over 60000 children.
- * The Company presented PICTURES WORDS AND OTHER SIGNS in conjunction with the part-time group at The Stables Theatre in February.
- * The Company presented an adapted production of THE WINTERS TALE in conjunction with the part-time group in The Stables Theatre in July. Both productions were very well received by their audiences.
- * Two country tours were made of the Grafton area and the Bathurst area.

However this year things are harder and it is more difficult to make ends meet. In real terms our funding is less than it was last year and we need more bookings to survive. It is almost as if now that IYDP is over, the Deaf are not as important and are out of people's minds. We hope we can survive, but we need some help. The first way that people can help us is to suggest to any teachers they know, that it is worthwhile booking the Company. Here is a brief outline of the shows that we have for schools.

FIVE LITTLE WISHES is for infants up to year three and is about the sort of wishes that everyone would like to make.

THEODORA, for years Two to Six is set at the time of the French Revolution and traces the story of a young girl who has been cast aside by her noble family because she is deaf.

THE COMMUNICATION SHOW for years four to eight is a light-hearted look at the ways people communicate.

SIGNPOSTS IN HISTORY is for years seven to eleven and traces the history of deafness and the development of signlanguage.

These shows cost \$1.20 for Primary and Infant schools and \$1.50 for Secondary schools and we have a minimum audience size of 100. The shows are also available to be presented for community groups. For bookings contact Bernard Curran on 3571200.

The other way people can help is by donating money to the Company. We do not mind how small the amount is and gifts over \$2.00 are tax deductible if given through The Elizabethan Theatre Trust. These donations are especially valuable this year as the Federal Government, through The Australia Council, has introduced the Challenge Grant. They will match the money raised through donations on the basis of one dollar for every three dollars raised up to a certain limit. The implication is of course that if a company is worth supporting, then people will put their money where their mouth is. We hope that people will think that we are worth supporting. Donations can be made in the way described below.

PLEASE HELP US SURVIVE: THE DEAF DESERVE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ARTS AS MUCH AS THE HEARING DO.

The General Manager
The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust
Box 137, PO
KINGS CROSS NSW 2011

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL CHALLENGE GRANT 1982

Please find enclosed a cheque/money order for \$
This represents my donation to The Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. This donation is given unconditionally. However it would be appreciated if, when considering allocations to the performing companies, preference in the allocation of this donation could be given to THE NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF.

signature

name

address

The Aett will forward you a receipt for tax deduction purposes.