

Theatre of the Deaf

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

COMPANY REPORT - AUGUST-DECEMBER 1987

The company spent the month of August in rehearsal for "DON QUIXOTE" which was scheduled to open on September 7 at Belvoir Street Theatre. It was a difficult period for the company as we attempted to break new ground by moving away from simply using Sign Language and voice, and tried to produce a purer form of "Visual Theatre". Another new move was to promote and market DON QUIXOTE as a "family show" in a daytime slot. This proved a difficult task as the competition in family entertainment was tough and our timing clashed with certain school examinations. During the run of DON QUIXOTE in the upstairs theatre at Belvoir Street one of the ceiling beams supporting the lighting grid split and threatened to collapse, so we were obliged to cancel some shows and move to the downstairs theatre in the same premises. The second venue holds only one third the capacity of the upstairs theatre, so we cancelled several schools who had booked large numbers, and later travelled to their school auditoriums to perform the play.

Also during the month of August, we participated in Deafness Awareness Week when we performed "BEHIND THE WINDOW" (our High School production) in the Martin Place Amphitheatre. This was a great success and an excellent promotion for the company. During this same week we invited Marlée Matlin, who was in Australia to promote Deafness Awareness Week at the time, to join us in rehearsal one afternoon. This proved to be a fruitful exchange for all concerned.

October and November saw the continuation of our Theatre-In-Education programme, with "THE MOON BETWEEN TWO HOUSES" for Infants and Primary Schools, and "BEHIND THE WINDOW" for High Schools. Our Visual Communication workshops also continued in schools, TAFEs and community organizations. Nola Colefax, who is a foundation member of the company and who has been leading these workshops on a freelance basis, has recently decided to discontinue teaching. In future the workshops will be given by Steve Ripley, Carol-lee Aquiline or qualified resident actors.

In October the Theatre of the Deaf also participated in "Childrens Week" - once again we performed in the Martin Place Amphitheatre, but this time with "THE MOON BETWEEN TWO HOUSES".

On November 30 we opened at Rooty Hill RSL Club for a one week return season of "DON QUIXOTE" especially for Western Suburbs schools. Considering this was so late in the school term we did quite well, and the schools who attended were thrilled, giving a lot of encouraging feedback. The RSL Club management were extremely co-operative and have invited us back next year.

Our artistic programme terminated on December 11 when the actors went on annual leave. The administration continues with preparation for the 1988 Summer School, finalizing of all company business, reports and schedules, as well as preparing the promotion and publicity material for our 1988 programme. Casting and re-contracting of actors has also been finalized for next year. Evening Sign Language classes have terminated and will resume approximately March or April next year. This last 10-week course was a very popular success. Steve Ripley will manage this project again next year.

During January we will run our usual two week Summer School from Monday, 11th to Friday, 22nd January. This time the course will be more intensive and participants will have a choice to be resident during the course. It will be held at the North Rocks Deaf and Blind School, which is a very modern, well-equipped campus, situated on 40 acres of land complete with swimming pool, tennis court and modern overnight accommodation. Subjects will include Dance, Acting, Comedy, Visual

Communication, Clowning, Theatre Lab and Mime Choreography.

Towards the end of January we will begin rehearsal for our adult production which opens March 4 at the Seymour Centre. It will be a triple bill: "THE LADY OF LARKSPUR LOTION" by Tennessee Williams; "THE JEALOUSY OF LE BARBOUILLE" by Moliere; plus another short one act play as yet undecided.

PERSONNEL/STAFF -

It has been a very turbulent five months for the company with more than our fair share of tragedy. Carol-lee's brother was involved in a fatal accident in America and Liz Marshall's father also died.

Steve Ripley, one of the company's strongest long-time actors decided to resign as resident actor. He will continue to work for the company in adult productions only, as well as freelance teaching and workshopping on the company's behalf.

We succeeded in obtaining a small grant from the Music Board of the Australia Council which will enable us to take on Maryanne Chan as musician-in-residence for a part of the year.

James Kerwin, a young deaf man from Brisbane, will also be joining the company in January as new trainee actor. He will perform in our Theatre-In-Education programme.

The Theatre of the Deaf would like to take this opportunity in wishing all the other divisions of the Trust a very Happy Christmas and New Year!

Maggie Johannsen
Coordinator