



**THEATRE OF THE DEAF** celebrated it's 15th anniversary in 1994. Over the past 15 years the Company has grown from humble beginnings as an amateur group catering to mainly Deaf audiences to a Company performing all over Australia to a much wider audience.

**Theatre of the Deaf** presents performances in schools, both primary and secondary, and is considered one of the premier theatre-for-young -people (TYP) teams. Students are invariably curious about the Deaf actors and their work and always have plenty of questions at the end of each performance. Currently there are three shows in the repertoire for schools:

**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ANGELS** - about environmental issues (primary schools)

**THE VERY FIRST DAY** - about the first time we start something (primary schools)

**SAME DIFFERENCE** - about discrimination, particularly in schools (high schools)

As well as performing in schools the Company performs for the general public, usually one theatre season a year. In 1993 SAVANT was presented at the Performance Space, and last year DEAF AND GAY was presented as part of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. There are also performances for Community groups, functions and fundraising events each year, these include public performances and a special " theatre dinner ". The Company holds workshops in Visual Communication and Deaf Drama classes and gives presentations about **Theatre of the Deaf** and it's work.

Training for the actors is a vital part of the Company's work as our actors do not get the same opportunities for training as hearing actors do. Training is therefore an ongoing process and each year we set aside at least four weeks for the actors to work with specialist tutors who have particular skills. In 1993 the actors were very fortunate to have a month of training at the National Theatre of the Deaf in the USA. Recently they have had training in script research, analysis and interpretation as well as participating in a workshop studying Butoh.

Touring has also become an important aspect of our work. Over the last 2 years **Theatre of the Deaf** toured to Queensland through the Queensland Arts Council, Victoria through the Victorian Arts Council, and northern NSW. These tours were mainly for schools but the Company also performed for the general public and the Deaf Community.

Last year we had some very exciting developments in the touring area. The Company toured to Singapore and this was **Theatre of the Deaf's** first appearance in an international festival and it was also the first time the Company performed with another Deaf theatre company - Singapore's HI! THEATRE. This was a wonderful experience for actors from both groups and we look forward to further contact and exchange of ideas with HI! THEATRE.

**Theatre of the Deaf** also toured New Zealand for the first time. This coincided with Deaf Pride Week in New Zealand which helped raise awareness of Deafness and Deaf issues. The Company performed in schools, provided workshops and presented special public performances in various centres in the North Island. The only other international tour undertaken by **Theatre of the Deaf** was to Japan in 1991 to attend the World Federation of the Deaf Congress which occurs every four years. **Theatre of the Deaf** appeared at the Congress and was chosen as one of the most successful theatre companies there.

Since 1989 the policy of **Theatre of the Deaf** has been to employ only Deaf actors - in other Deaf theatre companies there is usually a combination of Deaf and hearing actors, the hearing actors "voicing" for the Deaf actors who use signing. This continues an emphasis on 'dialogue' and 'text'. At that time it was also decided that the Company should focus on developing it's visual style, not to use signing or voice in it's productions. This unique visual style, which incorporates gesture, movement and strong facial expression has become our 'trademark'. It has proved enormously successful both with the actors and with audiences, it also allows us to perform to audiences anywhere as there is no language barrier at all. Nearly all our productions use this visual style now but we are also exploring ways of using Auslan (Australian Sign Language) in some productions as well.

**Theatre of the Deaf** is funded by the Performing Arts Board of the Australia Council and also the NSW government through the Ministry for the Arts. This funding meets approximately 55% of the Company's yearly expenditure. The remainder of our costs must be generated through performance and workshop fees, donations and sponsorship.

**Theatre of the Deaf** is certainly a unique and exciting company, performances are highly professional, accessible, entertaining and enjoyable. The visual presentation is like no other theatre group and the Company continues to move into new areas, exploring different ways of working, discovering new audiences and challenging perceptions of Deafness.

