

australian theatre of the deaf



Language of ONE

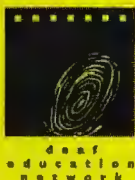
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Australian Theatre of the Deaf's 1999 production of 'Language of One' is dedicated in memory of Robert Lee

Language of one

Writers: Drew Emery
Lewis Merkin

Director: Julia Cotton

Cast: *Albert Rose:* Mike Canfield
Albert's shadow: Karen Lantry
Peter Hart: Jonathan Turner
Peter's shadow: Kate Nelson
Ida Rose: Mary Haire
Simon Rose: Colin Allen
Judith Rose: Medina Bucciarelli
Jerry: Christopher Saunders
Leigh: Rebecca Smee

Designer: Julia Christie

Lighting Design: Bruce McKendry

Production Manager
& Sound Design: Lisa Webb

Stage Manager: Jo Elliot

Auslan Consultant: Della Goswell

Auslan Interpreter: Pam Spicer

Vocal Assistance: Bill Pepper

Director's Notes

After working as Artistic Director with Australian Theatre of the Deaf (ATOD) in 1993 and 94 it is a great pleasure to be working with the company again. 'Language of One' was first brought to my attention by Gillian Minervini, previous General Manager of ATOD and was performed in Seattle in 1993 and later in New York in 1995. This version of the play has been adapted slightly but essentially remains true to the original script.

The play is about relationships - with one's family, one's lover, one's friends, oneself. The central figure, Albert is Deaf, Gay and Jewish, he is trying to work out where he fits in, where he feels comfortable. The central story is essentially a love story, will Albert's relationship with Peter, a hearing man, work out? Although this is a unique situation, it is also a universal situation, in all relationships we have difficulties. We understand Albert's experience make the journey with him.

'Language' is a bilingual production, using both sign and spoken language. The story is told through central characters with shadows interpreting. In Albert and Peter's cases these shadows also represent their alter-egos, sharing their experiences with them in a multi-layering of interpretation. Language and communication are key elements, working bilingually has been a fascinating but quite complicated process. The play has had to be translated into Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and then the voicing and signing synchronised to facilitate the flow of the action.

'Language' is abstract in style, space has been used as a metaphor for Deafness and the play is set in an interior landscape, in Albert's mind, the shadows of the people in his life leading us to where he is now.

We have an exceptional cast, a wonderful combination of past members of the company Deaf and hearing, some old faces and new. Mike Canfield and Jonathan Turner as Albert and Peter make a compelling couple as they draw us into the emotional world of their relationship, while the rest of the ensemble create their separate worlds and the characters in them. It has been an extraordinary process pulling it all together, working with the actors and the production team to bring this play to life and a wonderfully rewarding experience.

A special thank you to Pam, my shadow!

Julia Cotton

Drew Emery

Drew Emery lives in Seattle, USA, where he writes plays and fiction for others, and poetry for himself. His plays have won the Virginia Playwriting Prize, and the Howard Scammon Drama Prize. His collaborations 'Solo for Four', 'Hidden History' and 'Language of Love' were all originally commissioned and performed at the once-renowned Alice B. Theatre (Drew later went on to become the Artistic Director of the late, great theatre).

When 'Language' became 'Language of One', it received a critically-acclaimed showcase production at new York Theatre which Drew directed and designed sound for.

Currently, Drew is writing a collection of short stories called 'Nine Lives' while finishing up his latest play, 'Queer Window'. Drew considers Australia a second home and has lived here on occasion. Indeed, the first draft of 'Language' was written in Melbourne while on sabbatical. He is especially grateful for the friendship and support of Jonathan Cebon and Chris Cobbett, and the patience and energy of his collaborator, Lewis Merkin, without which this play could not have been written.

Lewis Merkin

Lewis Merkin resides in New York City where he juggles several careers while somehow managing to maintain his sanity. As an actor, he's worked everything from Broadway (original cast 'Children of a Lesser God'), London (Equus-Young Vic), national tours (National Theatre of the Deaf), and regionally (New York, Los Angeles and Seattle), which includes portraying Albert Rose in both previous productions of 'Language', and a smattering of TV and film.

He is thrilled that his first venture as a writer 'Language of One' is now getting its international premiere as part of the Mardi Gras Festival and thanks to Australian Theatre of the Deaf for that opportunity. Lewis is ever so thankful for the friendship and love of his Australian host, Steve Ripley, and for the willingness (bravery?) of his collaborator, Drew Emery, for diving into Deaf culture as well as for his patience and humour.

the writers

behind the scenes

Julia Cotton

Julia Cotton started her career as a dancer with the Australian Ballet. She later danced with the Australian Dance Theatre and choreographed for both these companies. She moved into other areas choreographing for drama, opera, children's theatre and television.

Julia directed the street theatre group Bitumen for the 86 Festival Perth. From 1988 Julia concentrated her work on Etcetera, a company she co-founded in 1983. Etcetera is a company combining performers with various skills to create a unique and humorous form of visual theatre. Etcetera's work includes theatre seasons - 'For Example', 'Etcetera Incorporated' and 'In Which Case', tours to festivals throughout Australia (Adelaide, Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart) and overseas tours to festivals in Canada, Singapore, Edinburgh, London and Indonesia. Etcetera has also appeared on television (Andrew Denton's 'The Money or the Gun' and the 'Big Gig'), at the World Expo 88 and in Monte Carlo for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Bid as well as at numerous dance parties and corporate events. During this time Julia performed, directed and choreographed for the company.

In 1992 as well as directing 'In Which Case' for Etcetera, Julia directed 'Shape Up' for Australian Theatre of the Deaf, 'Rap it Up' for Death Defying Theatre, choreographed 'Red Alert' for the Flying Fruit Fly Circus and worked as Associate Director on 'The Frogs' for Belvoir St Theatre. In 1993 Julia was appointed Artistic Director of Australian Theatre of the Deaf, enabling her to continue an interest in visual theatre. She devised and directed 'Savant' and directed 'Same Difference' for the company.

In 1995 Julia was appointed senior Movement Tutor at NIDA where she has taught acting students and worked on various productions over the past four years.

[Julia Cotton has been made available to work on this project courtesy of NIDA]

Director

Julia Christie

Designer

Julia Christie graduated from NIDA in 1997. Since then she has designed 'Maligne's Fire' with director Gail Kelly, 'The Moonwalkers' for Wildwood Theatre (Canberra), 'The Maids' for Theatre 20/20, costume design for 'Territory' with One Extra Dance Company and 'Alabama Rain' with director Jade McCutcheon.

Bruce McKendry

Bruce McKendry has provided the illumination across a broad range of theatrical events. Working with such companies as Sidetrack, Performance Group, Etcetera, Legs on the Wall, Q Theatre, Marionette Theatre, Belvoir Street, State Theatre, Australian Dance Theatre and the Australian Ballet, he has performed many roles. From flyperson to Assistant Stage Manager from Stage Manager to Set Designer from Stage Electrician to Lighting Designer from Tour Manager to writer; he has worked at them all.

He has lit hundreds of shows and prefers to work in the liquid medium of light at the cutting edge of expression. His plays have been produced by the Stage Company, Marionette Theatre and the North Coast Theatre Company. Two of which deal with the historical characters of Vincent Van Gogh & Nijinsky.

Lighting Designer

Production Manager

Lisa Webb

Lisa Webb recently graduated from the technical production course at NIDA. Whilst at NIDA she was the production manager of 'The Front Page', and sound designer of 'A Cry from the City of Virgins'. Outside of NIDA Lisa was the sound designer of 'The Government Inspector' for The New Theatre and 'The Maids' for Theatre 20/20.

Sound Design

Jo Elliot

Jo Elliot is currently a third year student at NIDA technical production course. Jo has also worked on a variety of productions with the lighting department of the Sydney Opera House. Most recently the David Parsons Dance Company.

Stage Manager



Role: Albert Rose

Mike Canfield hails from the USA and made his debut in theatre by playing the lead role in the musical 'Oklahoma' at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in New York. He then was hired as one of the performers for NTID's professional travelling troupe, Sunshine Too, for one year in 1984.

In 1987 Mike moved to Australia and joined the Australian Theatre of the Deaf (ATOD) as an actor in 1989. Throughout the duration of his employment with ATOD, Mike went from being an actor to Associate Director and then to Artistic Director of the Company. While Artistic Director for ATOD Mike also accepted the invitation to direct visual pieces for theatre groups in Hong Kong and Vietnam.

Mike also teaches Australian Sign Language (Auslan) for the Deaf Education Network (DEN) and is part of the teaching team for the interpreting training program at the Petersham Tafe. He is currently on the sub-committee of Theatre Events for the upcoming XIIIth World Federation of the Deaf Congress to be held in Brisbane, July, 99.

His television credits include ABC's 'GP' and 'Janus' and Channel 7's 'All Saints'. Mike's speciality is sign singing (the art of sign language with music) and since 1991 he has been involved performing and consulting for major dance parties such as the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras, Pride, Aids Council of NSW's 'Hand in Hand' and many other special events.



Role: Albert's shadow

Since graduating from Newcastle University in 1983 with B.A in Drama, Karen Lantry has worked with Pipi Storm, Shop-o-fools, 2 til 5 Theatre, Australian Theatre of the Deaf and Zeal Theatre, as actor, teacher, artist, clown and outdoor performer.

Karen's work with Australian Theatre of the Deaf in 1987/88 included roles in productions such as 'Moon Between Two Houses', 'Signposts' and 'Don Quixote'.

1990 till the present, Karen has been based in Newcastle, working primarily as an actor with Zeal Theatre. Zeal's productions have been written by the company and toured throughout Victorian, NSW and Queensland schools. Zeal's work demands a high level of physical, improvisational, musical and ensemble skills. The company has explored the staging of productions in cathedrals ('The Hunchback' in Newcastle and Melbourne); the tunnels and towers of Fort Scratchy in Newcastle, and brought tattooing live to the stage in its 'Tatau: Rites of Passage', a co-production with Pacific Underground in Auckland and Sydney. Zeal Theatre is now flourishing in Melbourne.

Between productions Karen turns her hand to mask-making, sign language interpreting, drama teaching and mothering her two children.

Karen Lantry

Mike Canfield

Jonathan Turner

Role: Peter Hart



Jonathan Turner's professional career began in 1983 when he performed in 'The Sound of Music' at the Princess Theatre (Melbourne) as Friedrich Von Trap.

Following a five year stint at Melbourne University where Jonathan performed in and directed over fifteen shows ranging from musical comedy to Shakespeare, working with directors such as Michael Kantor and Barrie Kosky, Jonathan won a scholarship to study overseas as the *Ecole International de Theatre Jacques Lecoq*.

Graduating from *Lecoq* in 1995, Jonathan stayed in France performing in 'Le Bus', by Stabislas Stratiev (*Le Theatre des Deux Rives* and National tour) and 'Cabaret Monstre' (*Theatre de la Jacquerie*, Paris). Jonathan played the co-lead in a short film 'The Shooter' directed by Dove Peterson (Paris) and was also commissioned by the Ville de Paris to perform as singing sculpture in an open air sculpture exhibition on the Champus-Elysees.

In 1996 Jonathan moved to Switzerland where he co-created and performed in 'Brainstorm' (a tri-lingual physical theatre piece) which toured nationally through Switzerland. In 1997 Jonathan moved to England appearing in several episodes of 'Unique Species' and joining forces with Hoipolloi Theatre. With Hoipolloi he toured nationally and internationally (Germany, Sweden and the Edinburgh Festival).

In August 1998 Jonathan returned to Australia and since then has performed in 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle' by Bertolt Brecht (Company B, Belvoir Street)

Role: Peter's shadow



Kate Nelson joined Australian Theatre of the Deaf in 1998 as one of three Deaf actors. In that year she performed four different productions both for adult and child audiences.

She also toured with the company throughout NSW, Victoria and New Zealand. During this time she has been involved in leading workshops in visual theatre for all ages.

After finishing school, Kate completed a B.A. at Sydney University majoring in psychology. After some overseas travel, she then went on to do a graduate Diploma in Rehabilitation Counselling. She joins the acting profession after three years as a rehabilitation counsellor and after deciding that her passion for acting was worth pursuing.

Kate grew up performing in school plays and local community productions in Nelson Bay, Newcastle and Fiji.

Kate was born Deaf in Fiji into a hearing family. Having grown up speaking, she began learning Auslan (Australian Sign Language) when she was 22 and her Deaf teacher, Nola Colefax, was the first Deaf person she'd ever met.

She is now 28 and this her first role in a bilingual production.

Kate Nelson

Role: Ida Rose (Albert's Grandmother)



NIDA graduate Mary Haire has worked as an actor, singer, dancer, writer, dramaturgue, script assessor, director, choreographer and dance teacher for 29 years in theatre, film, television, radio, cabaret and rock and roll.

In 1998 Mary presented her translation of Lorca's 'Blood Wedding' at Waverly Library to mark Lorca's centenary, then travelled to Spain to participate in celebrations in Madrid and Granada. Work included voice-overs for SBS Television, 'Talking Books for Royal Blind Society, plus two plays; 'Dive Divas' commissioned by Marrickville Council with Australia Council support for production at its swimming pools in March 1999, and 'Shells' to be produced by Theatre Kimberley Broome, in July 1999.

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Mary Haire

Role: Simon Rose (Albert's Father)



Colin Allen began work as an actor in 1975 at 13 years old. At the age of 17, he was invited to become a professional actor and he co-founded the professional company Australian Theatre of the Deaf. 1999 thus marks his 2nd decade as a professional actor.

Colin has performed leading roles in 'King Lear', 'The Three Penny Opera', 'Winter's Tale', 'The Amorous Flea', 'Man Equals Man' and starred in fifty productions in his acting career.

He travelled to America to work with Deaf theatre companies including the Cleveland Sign Theatre and the Sunshine Too International Touring Company in New York. In 1994, Colin was the inaugural International Conference Director with the globally recognised National Theatre of the Deaf in Connecticut, with his main responsibility being the co-ordination of the National and World-wide Deaf Theatre Conference.

Colin is a nation-wide community leader and freelance business/event consultant. He dedicates his voluntary time to the Australian Association of the Deaf who are hosting a number of major international events in 1999 including the XIII World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf, 2nd International Youth Camp, International Deaf Theatre Conference and WFD Asia/Pacific Secretariat Regional Meeting.

Role: Judith Rose (Albert's Mother)



Medina Bucciarelli was born in Sydney and became Deaf in early childhood for reasons unknown.

In 1996 Medina joined the Australian Theatre of the Deaf (ATOD) as a full time professional actor. Although she has no tertiary training in acting she has participated in many training workshops and programs through her period of employment with ATOD.

Working with ATOD has taken Medina throughout Australia and New Zealand, with school shows, workshops and public performances. Medina has performed in 'The Very First Day', 'Hands and Tales', 'Jukebox', 'The Sign is Right', 'Signed Sealed Delivered' and 'Masks are Barking' and many other short skits presented for special events including fundraisers, launches, Australian Deaf Games and the Sydney Deaf Festival.

Before joining the theatre Medina worked as a child care teacher for the Deaf for over four years. On a part time basis, Medina is currently finishing her Diploma in child studies.

Medina Bucciarelli

Christopher Saunders



Role: Jerry/Irwin/Tutor/Rally Interpreter/Maitre'd

In 1986 Christopher Saunders worked as an hearing actor with Australian Theatre of the Deaf performing in their school program and as pozzo in the critically acclaimed production 'Waiting for Godot'. Since then he has had TV roles using sign language with Deaf actors in 'GP' and 'All Saints'.

Over the past sixteen years Christopher has performed with numerous Australian theatre companies including Griffin, Hunter Valley, Elston Hocking & Wood, Theatre South, Riverina, Universal (Vic), Theatre Up North, Swy, Hole In the Wall and Playhouse (Perth). His television credits include 'Spellbinder', 'Water Rats', 'Home and Away', 'Sword of Honour' and 'Paperman'.

During the last three years Christopher has been performing a one man play, 'Three Men Walk into a Bar' which premiered at the Sydney Fringe Festival in 1996. 'Three Men...' has been performed in Tasmania, Canberra and regional NSW and had a three week season at the Kings Head Theatre in London in 1997.

Most recently he has been working for BighArt as an actor/director with writer Scott Rankin, running workshops and creating performances with at risk youth in regional Australia. The two shows developed, 'SLR 5000' and 'Pandora's Shed', have been performed on the west coast of Tasmania and throughout the Riverina, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong.

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Rebecca Smee



Role: Leigh/Interpreter/ACE Relay Officer/Waiter/Speaker

Rebecca Smee was very happy to have the opportunity to combine Auslan (Australian Sign Language) with acting in her first production with Australian Theatre of the Deaf. She has been studying sign language for the last seven months and hopes to become an interpreter for the Deaf.

After studying at Theatre Nepean she has been singing and writing music, as well as working in theatre and television. Some of her credits include 'The Crucible', 'Deluge', 'King Lear', 'Metamorphosis', 'The Golden Age', 'Just Wild About Harry', 'Reformed', 'Seeds of Power', 'The Tasmanian Babies Fiasco' and most recently 'Pikers' at Belvoir.

Rebecca is currently recording an album and performing in the comedy 'He Died with a Felafel in His Hand' which will be touring to the Melbourne Comedy Festival, and has just finished work on the television mini series 'The Potato Factory'.



In 1999 Australian Theatre of the Deaf (ATOD) celebrates its 20th birthday as a professional theatre company.

Supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, NSW Ministry for the Arts, sponsors, members and donations, ATOD produces mainstage productions, school shows for all levels of education and community shows.

Renowned for its unique and accessible visual style, the company tours throughout Australia and supplements its program with workshops in visual theatre and non-verbal communication, performances at corporate events, launches, fundraisers and festivals.

ATOD also organises Auslan (Australian Sign Language) Interpreted performances for other theatre companies.

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australian theatre of the deaf

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