

# TOD

## NEWSLETTER

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# THEATRE OF THE DEAF

## XIIth WFD CONGRESS Vienna, Austria

One of our recent highlights was our trip to the XII World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) Congress held in Vienna, Austria. Our show, *Hands & Tales*, proved to be a big hit with our international Deaf audience. The show was well received with heaps of laughter by all who saw it. It was a note of reassurance for us to continue our good work. Though we were a little nervous before the show, it turned into an exciting night for us all!



We enjoyed the wonderful opportunity of meeting Deaf theatre groups from different countries - Germany, Holland, Sweden and Poland to name a few. Our exchange of information was both interesting and invaluable. Throughout the Congress, we met many other WFD participants, attended conference sessions, sold all our new ATOD t-shirts and enjoyed the beautiful sights and night life of Vienna!

Contact was made with the Australian Embassy and a 2 hour reception was held there, thanks to Pam who organised all this. We received a warm welcome with drinks and delicious snacks and a chance to chat with the Australian Ambassador, Ron Walker and his co-workers. The actors performed our famous short story, *Cinderella* (with a Deaf twist), and a laugh was had by all! It was a memorable afternoon.

The Closing Ceremony was the highlight of the whole Congress as the WFD flag was handed to Bobbie Blackson, President of AAD (Australian Association of the Deaf) for hosting the next WFD Congress in Brisbane in 1999. Even our Ambassador, Ron Walker, was present to say a few words welcoming "the world" to our wonderful friendly country in 1999! A fantastic promotional video of Brisbane and Queensland was shown to an audience of 1000 or more. The actors performed a 5 minute skit showing the history of Australia and welcoming everyone to the next WFD Congress in Brisbane. The audience thoroughly enjoyed the video and our performance. It was a moving ceremony filled with pride and joy for all the Australian participants as we thought of others back home.



The Toddlers went on their separate ways to enjoy a week of holidays and we all made it back to Vienna for our long and exhausting trip home. It was a smooth trip and an enriching experience for us all, thanks to Gillian, our administrator/heroine, who worked so hard to get us there.

## WORKSHOPS

This year we have held some very successful workshops. The first one was a Theatre Interpreting Workshop on Sunday 4th, June. Sandra Barefoot, an experienced theatre interpreter from England, conducted the workshop with 10 people participating, including Mike and the TOD actors. Another one was a Sign Singing Workshop on the

weekend of 17th and 18th June. Mike led the workshop with some help from the actors with 11 people participating. The participants were enthusiastic and keen to learn the skills of sign singing. The latest workshop was an introduction to Visual Theatre which was held on the weekend of 29th and 30th July. Fourteen people participated in this successful workshop led by Mike. Unfortunately, the Deaf Drama Classes to be held on Monday evenings starting in October were cancelled due to a low number of applicants.



TOD will continue to provide more workshops on a range of different Deaf theatre-related topics next year and details will be forthcoming.

## DEAF DRAMA WEEKEND

TOD is working on securing a venue to conduct two weekends of Deaf Drama for Deaf and CODA youths. One weekend is for children aged 7-12 and the other is for 13-18 year olds. We are aiming to hold this early next year between January and March. The Deaf Drama Weekend will cover visual theatre and games, dance and sign singing, mask making, some lectures from various theatre/TV experts, acrobatics, clowning and other activities. TOD will provide staff to educate and supervise the youngsters. A fee will be charged to cover expenses. If interested, please contact Mike Canfield for more information.

## NEW BOARD MEMBERS

TOD is pleased to announce that three new Board members will be joining us and they are Anna Hruby, Jeremy Godwin and Sharron Wilson. Anna Hruby is an accomplished actor and her voice is well known on radio. Jeremy Goodwin is a NIDA graduate and is currently a high school teacher at Scotts College. Sharron Wilson is one of the Deaf consultants of TAFE. Welcome aboard!

## 1996 TOURS



TOD was successful in receiving funding from Playing Australia to assist the acting ensemble to tour for two weeks in Tasmania in conjunction with the National Deafness Awareness Conference in Hobart. The company is also booked to tour Victoria once again with the Victoria Arts Council (VAC). At the moment the tour is for two weeks but, it could be extended depending on bookings. The South Australian Deaf Society expressed interest in having TOD come to their state for a one week tour. Negotiations are still underway and hopefully in the near future, the SA tour will be confirmed. It has been more than 10 years since TOD visited SA so keep our fingers crossed for getting this tour off the ground! All this will occur from May to June next year.



## MELBOURNE SOJOURN

A week after TOD arrived from Vienna, the actors went to Melbourne on the weekend of 28th July to perform *A Day In The Life Of Angels* at the Monash University and *Hands & Tales* organised by the Victorian Council of the Deaf. It was a very successful short tour, as the actors performed the *Angels* show (twice) in front of 600+ children and in the evening, 200+ for *Hands & Tales*. We received excellent raves for our shows and everyone was very pleased with the outcome.

## THE SIGN OF THE PHANTOM

This musical production had a successful run throughout September at the Performance Space in Redfern. The audience numbers gradually grew to almost full houses by the last week of the season. The cast of seven were pretty worn out by the end, but we had a wonderful cast party at Matthew Fargher's (the musical director) home in Clovelly. We had a camp fire in the backyard, delicious food and even lit some fireworks! Thanks to Matthew for lending his home for the party.

On the opening night, *The Sign Of The Phantom* was received enthusiastically by the audience. During the early weeks of September, it was shown on the Today program and Review (ABC) on television. We had 3 reviews in major newspapers which were generally very positive.



"Sign Of The Phantom is physical theatre in a very pure form - using the body to speak. It's a seductive, fascinating and highly entertaining experience for all."

Sydney Morning Herald

Of course, we had mixed responses about the show, but overall, the majority of people thought it was enjoyable and very funny. Most commented on the professionalism and quality of the performers and the terrific music and singing.

For the International Day of Deaf Persons on 24th September, the NSW Association of the Deaf organised, as part of the "Deaf Pride Week", for *The Sign Of The Phantom* to be listed as one of the highlights of the week. We had a full and raucous house on that Sunday and there was a great feeling of Deaf Pride and celebration for everyone.

TOD produced edited highlights of *The Sign Of The Phantom* on videotape. We will be sending the videos to various festivals in Australia and are hoping to participate in the Melbourne International Festival and the Australian Theatre Festival in Canberra next year. Fingers crossed!



## QUEENSLAND TOUR

TOD is once again embarking on another tour to sunny Queensland. This tour, organised in conjunction with the Queensland Arts Council, will run for 8 weeks presenting *A Day In The Life Of Angels* to schools on the mid-Queensland coast - Bundaberg, Moryborough, Gympie, Hervey Bay, Noosa Head and many other places! On the way the actors will be presenting *Hands & Tales* in Lismore and Brisbane (including one visual communication workshop). The tour starts on 5th October and the actors will return home in the first weekend of December.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

TOD is sometimes a contact organisation for other entertainment/theatre/TV companies to arrange sign language interpreters, sign singers and Deaf actors for their performances and programmes. The Bennelong Programme of the Opera House use TOD to help find interpreters to translate some of their childrens' theatre performances. The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras have used TOD a lot to arrange to have sign singers and Deaf performers for their Mardi Gras party, Sleaze Ball and annual Awards Nights. Various television programmes contact TOD to help to find Deaf actors for advertisements, movies and series; the latest was Janus for ABC. Sometimes TOD works as an 'agency' for all this outside work.

## 1996 NEW SHOWS

### JUKEBOX

(Year 3 to Year 8)

Jukebox presents Deafness with a difference. Through the device of the jukebox the audience selects well known songs from a list which is performed by the acting ensemble using sign singing. Between the songs the actors present their own stories about Deafness and life in the Deaf community. These stories are a personal and candid insight into their world and are performed using TOD's visual style. The stories and skits give an overview of the community, the language, culture and people. Jukebox is a dynamic performance and one that will change young peoples' views on Deafness forever.

Jukebox highlights audience participation and interaction with the actors and students learn a song in sign language. Sign singing is a form unique to TOD and is an innovative way to cut across audience misconceptions about Deafness.

Jukebox brings together music, comedy, visual theatre and story telling in a unique way making it accessible to audiences of all ages.

## SHOW & TELL (Preschool to Year 2)

Short segments of storytelling sign singing, and visual theatre will make up this thirty minute show, giving the young audience quick "grabs" rather than a long narrative. The kids will witness two famous Australian childrens' stories come to life and will participate in learning to sign along to a well known childrens' song. The TOD acting ensemble will enthral this audience with their energetic visual imagery, fun and humour, bringing Deaf theatre and culture to them for the first time.



## NEW COMMUNITY SHOW (Family and Adults)

In the tradition of producing community shows like *Castles In The Air* and *Hands & Tales*, a new community show will be produced. The show (with a new title) will be a compilation of the best of TOD, including some new material and will be performed largely for the Deaf community for fundraisers, social evenings, etc. The 90 minute show takes a cabaret format and contains songs, skits and lots of Deaf humour. These community shows have proven to be very popular with the Deaf community and are a vital link between the Company and our community.

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