



THEATRE OF THE DEAF

presents

SAVANT

...knowing more than most...

at the
PERFORMANCE SPACE
9-19 DECEMBER 1993

"I have a letter from the orphanage" announced the Reverend Cavendish. Uncertain about delivering it directly to the recently bereaved Mrs. Wodehouse he decided instead to give it to the butler, who looked first at the letter then back at the priest with a strange smile. It was as if he already knew the contents of the letter.

"What now?" thought the troubled widow. Mr. Wodehouse, her apparently respectable husband had left her and her daughter Lucy all but penniless. The only hope now was that the handsome young French Count, Monsieur Duchamp, who was currently courting Lucy, would indeed marry her. A proposal seemed imminent.

What a shock for poor Mrs. Wodehouse to discover in the contents of the letter that there was a young girl at the orphanage, not much younger than her own daughter, who had been the 'ward' of her late husband. Now that her husband was dead the responsibility of the girl shifted to the unfortunate widow. Added to this, as the orphanage had received no money from the late Mr. Wodehouse for some time, the orphanage had no choice but to hand the child over. She would arrive this very day!

Luckily, Dr. Wentworth was on hand to minister to poor Mrs. Wodehouse. He had visited the house regularly during her husband's illness and had continued, as the dying man had requested, to watch over the widow and her daughter.

And so young Nettie was introduced into the household that day. It was clear from the start, that things were never to be the same for any of them.

SAVANT continues the development of Theatre of the Deaf's unique visual style of theatre as seen in previous productions RAINSHADOW and WOLFMOON. Most Deaf theatre companies employ both Deaf and hearing actors and continue to rely on language both 'spoken' and 'signed'. TOD has, since 1989, employed only Deaf actors. Also at that time Carol-lee Aquilino, the company's first Deaf Artistic Director began developing the visual style the company uses today. This style involves no dialogue and uses a combination of mime, movement and gesture to tell a story that can be understood and appreciated by a universal audience.

In SAVANT the Deaf actors play 'hearing' characters. Only Sofya Gollan plays a Deaf character, Nettie, and it is through Nettie that the audience shares a silent world.

SAVANT tells the story of Nettie's arrival - and the subsequent upheaval she causes to a Victorian household. It shows the absurdity of some of the notions and beliefs held a century ago - some of which still persist today.

THEATRE OF THE DEAF
1993 has been a very mobile year for Theatre of the Deaf. Julia Cotton has joined the company as Artistic Director, replacing Carol-lee Aquilino. As Artistic Director, Mike Canfield became Associate Director. In July Shona Roberts joined the company as Administrator. The performing ensemble has also been on the move, making two extensive tours of SHAPE UPI for the Queensland Arts Council. In June all four actors attended the Summer School at the National Theatre of the Deaf, USA. The company has also presented SING & SIGN to 5000 primary school students and has also participated in many community events and workshops.

Next year the company has been invited to perform at the International Convention of Deaf Arts in Florence and the Singapore Festival. Tours are also planned to New Zealand, Victoria and NSW country areas. Theatre of the Deaf will start the year performing a late show for the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival.

WITH THANKS TO
The Management Board of Theatre of the Deaf: Margaret Davis, Colin Allen, Maria Vinter, Della Goswell, Marcia Girke, Anne MacRae, Jenny Nicholls, Bruce McKendry, Rosemary Whitfield, Colin Allen, Roger Hind, Adam Jackson, Carrie Metcalfe, Brenna Hobson, STC Props Hire, Newborn Flower Shop, Samuel Smith & Son P/L (Yalumba Wines), Stannore Liquor Supplies, European Catering Service & Special Events Productions, Made Professional Catering Services, Pages Hire Centre and The Performance Space.

Theatre of the Deaf is supported by the Australian Council



and the NSW Ministry for the Arts



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JULIA COTTON

Julia began her career with the Australian Ballet, dancing with the company for three years and later choreographing, most notably the ballet Superman. She is a founding member of ETCETERA THEATRE COMPANY and has been involved in all their productions including FOR EXAMPLE and ETCETERA INCORPORATED, which toured to all the Australia festivals and to London and the Edinburgh and Singapore Festivals. Early this year Julia directed Etcetera's IN WHICH CASE for the Sydney Festival. Last year Julia directed SHAPE UPI for Theatre of the Deaf, RAP IT UP for Death Defying Theatre, choreographed RED ALERT for the Flying Fruit Fly Circus, and was associate director and choreographer for FROGS at Belvoir Street. This year she took up her position as Artistic Director of Theatre of the Deaf.

MARGARET DAVIS

Margaret was the first hearing actor to work with Theatre of the Deaf in 1979. In 1989 she co-directed (with Carol-lee Aquilino) the company's highly successful 10th anniversary production, WOLFMOON. She is currently a freelance director and writer. She recently directed and choreographed BLOOD WEDDING for final year students at Theatre Nepean and her latest play MAD BEFORE MID-DAY, was showcased by Playworks in August.

STEPHEN CURTIS

Since graduating from NIDA in 1978 Stephen has worked extensively with major theatre companies throughout Australia. For the State Theatre Company of South Australia he designed Australian premieres SIGNAL DRIVER, THE BLIND GIANT IS DANCING and DREAMS IN AN EMPTY CITY, as well as TWELFTH NIGHT, ROMEO & JULIET, and THE CONQUEST OF CARMEN MIRANDA. For the Sydney Theatre Company - DINKUM ASSORTED and FURIOUS, also premieres, and THE SEAGULL, THE COUNTRY WIFE, ALL MY SONS, ROMEO & JULIET and THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR. For Belvoir Street Theatre STATE OF SHOCK, POPULAR MECHANICALS 1 & 2, HATE and HEADBUTT. For the Australian Opera WHITSUNDAY and THE TURN OF THE SCREW and for Sydney Dance Company NEARLY BEYOND. As a Production Designer Stephen has designed feature films TWELFTH NIGHT, BREATHING UNDERWATER and Tracy Moffatt's recently released BEDEVIL. In 1993 he designed IN WHICH CASE for Etcetera, KAFKA DANCES for Griffin Theatre and SUMMER OF THE ALIENS for Sydney Theatre Company.

MIKE CANFIELD

As an experienced actor from USA, Mike joined TOD in 1989. He has been involved in many productions as actor or director, his favourite being WOLFMOON. Mike also conducts classes and workshops in Australian Sign Language and visual communication. He is also an Office Bearer with several Deaf organisations. Mike has been the Associate Director with the company since January 1993.

SAMANTHA WILSON

Samantha has been with Theatre of the Deaf for four years. Born in Whangā, she was involved with the amateur Adelaide Deaf theatre company GESTURES, which featured in a documentary of the same name screened on SBS TV. Samantha has done some commercial work, and this year received the 'Darling Family Scholarship Award' at the National Theatre of the Deaf Summer School in the USA. SAVANT is her second mainstage production following RAINSHADOW in 1991.

CAROLINE CONLON

Before joining TOD in January 1991 Caroline did liaison work in the Deaf community. She has been in many productions with TOD, her favourites being TUNNEL VISION, SING & SIGN and SHAPE UPI. Others include TICK-A-BOX, MORE JUMPING OFF THE SHELF and RAINSHADOW. This year she attended the National Theatre of the Deaf Summer School in the USA.

PHILLIP DEBS

Phillip has been performing for many years in a variety of work from school productions to circus work to TV commercials. He joined Theatre of the Deaf in 1991. This year he went to study at the National Theatre of the Deaf in the USA. He has earned a reputation as the elf of the Company. SAVANT is his second mainstage production, following RAINSHADOW in 1991.

ROBERT FARMER

Born in West Australia, Robert joined the company earlier this year. He has appeared in SHAPE UPI and CASTLES IN THE AIR. He studied with the company at the National Theatre of the Deaf Summer School in the USA.

Devised by • Julia Cotton,
Margaret Davis & the company

THE CAST

Nettie • Sofya Gollan
The Rev. Cavendish • Mike Canfield
Mrs Wodehouse • Caroline Conlon
Lucy Wodehouse • Samantha Wilson
Monsieur Duchamp • Phillip Debs
Dr Wentworth • Robert Farmer
The Butler • Matthew Fargher

INTERVAL • 15 to 20 minutes

Director • Julia Cotton
Dramaturg • Margaret Davis
Designer • Stephen Curtis
Lighting • Geoff Cobham
Musician/Composer • Matthew Fargher
Production Manager • Lee-Anne Donnelly
Stage Manager • Briony Phillips
Assistant Stage Manager • Leonie Dixon
Costumes • Bronwyn Jones
Set Construction • Tony Williams
Follow Spot Operator • Adam Jackson

Administrator • Shona Roberts
Interpreters • Dylan Souter, Pam Spicer
Publicist • Penelope Welts Enterprises
Publicity Design • REPO Graphics

SOFYA GOLLAN

A 1992 NIDA graduate, Sofya has appeared with the Australian Peoples Theatre in THE LOADED UTE, ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA, THE GOOD PERSON OF SZECHUAN for the Watershed Theatre Company at the Crossroads. TV credits include PLAYSCHOOL and GP. Sofya was a full-time performer with Theatre of the Deaf from 1986 to 1990, appearing in WOLFMOON and various Theatre-in-Education productions.

MATTHEW FARGHER

Matthew trained as an actor in Paris, and has performed in theatre, film and television around Australia. He has been musical director for Circus Oz, Stalker Still Theatre, Red Weather, Death Defying Theatre and for John Clarke's ROYAL COMMISSION INTO THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY at Belvoir Street. He has made and designed musical instruments for these companies and others.

BRIONY PHILLIPS

Originally from Adelaide, lived and travelled far and wide, finally settling in Sydney. Worked with Griffin Theatre Company, Riverina Theatre Company and NAG Theatre Company

before doing three years at NIDA in the Technical Production course. During 1993, she has worked with ETCETERA Theatre Company and at WOMAD in Adelaide and with the Bell Shakespeare Company.

GEOFF COBHAM

Geoff studied drama, design and lighting at Rusden State College of Victoria. He has designed lights for Circus Oz, Flying Fruit Fly Circus, Belvoir St Theatre, Theatre of Image, Etcetera, Bell Shakespeare Company, the Sydney Front, One Extra Company, Meryl Tankard Company and ADT. His recent lighting design credits include DRESSED TO KILL exhibition at the National Gallery, ALL OF ME for Legs on the Wall and KAFKA DANCES at the Griffin.