

THEATRE OF THE DEAF

BEHIND THE SCENES

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR:

Julia Cotton

Decides the yearly artistic programme for the company, and chooses artistic personnel to be involved with each project. She is the main representative for the company for publicity matters.

ADMINISTRATOR:

Gillian Minervini

Primarily responsible for the continued financial viability of the company. She plans and co-ordinates the company's activities with the Artistic Director.

INTERPRETER/ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT: Pam Spicer

Translates for the company from Auslan (Australian Sign Language) to English, and vice versa. She also works with the Artistic Director and Administrator on many other aspects of the company's activities, including holding primary responsibility for liaising with schools re: performances and bookings:

HISTORY OF THEATRE OF THE DEAF

The appearance of talented Deaf performers on stage and in film around the world has increased public awareness of Deafness and the international Deaf Community over the past twenty years. Major acting awards in England and the United States have been won by Deaf actresses. There have been numerous appearances by Deaf actors on television serials, while Linda Bove, a Deaf American actress is a regular 'resident' on Sesame Street.

There are now several professional theatres in the world which employ a company of Deaf actors. Russia houses the oldest company, the MOSCOW THEATRE OF MIMICRY GESTURE, which has been in operation for sixty years. The USA hosts perhaps a half-dozen theatres of the deaf. The most famous of these is the long-standing NATIONAL THEATRE OF THE DEAF (NTD). The NTD has performed on Broadway, national and international television, and hundreds of stages around the world. There are also professional theatres of the Deaf in England, Scandinavia and Japan.

Australia's Theatre of the Deaf had its origins in the early 1970's under the guidance of the then Adult Deaf Society of NSW. The group provided an opportunity for local members of the deaf community to perform in and view theatrical productions - it was a theatre for the Deaf. Similar groups were started up in Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane - though none has shared our good fortune in securing government arts funding and they remain amateur theatre groups.

Following a tour of Australia by the NTD in 1974, the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust began its long commitment to the development of a professional theatre of the Deaf in Australia, hiring a hearing director to work with the NSW group. Early years were spent taking mime, acting, dance and mask classes and later, performances of KING LEAR, OF ROGUES AND CLOWNS and FIVE FLIGHTS TO FREEDOM were staged in major Sydney venues.

In 1979, with backing from the Australia Council's Theatre Board and the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the company was launched as a fully professional theatre company - of the Deaf.

By 1986, the company had developed 16 original productions for school children with performances in Tasmania, Melbourne, South Australia and the ACT plus regional centres and towns throughout NSW.

There have been appearances on local and national television (notably ABC TV's GP and THE MONEY OR THE GUN, and A COUNTRY PRACTICE), a performance before HRH The Prince of Wales, an Order of Australia Medal for founding member Nola Colefax and mainstage productions such as THE WINTER'S TALE, THE THREEPENNY OPERA, MAN EQUALS MAN, WAITING FOR GODOT, SGANARELLE and THE LADY OF LARKSPUR LOTION.

1989 saw the appointment of Carol-lee Aquiline, herself Deaf, as Artistic Director with the highly successful WOLFMoon launching the company's new visual style in November that year. Since that time Theatre of the Deaf has produced many shows for primary and high schools such as CULTURE SHOCK, TUNNEL VISION and SHAPE UP! which utilise the unique visual style which has become the company's trademark. Theatre of the Deaf is the only professional Deaf theatre company in Australia and one of the country's premier theatre-for-young-people (TYP) teams.

1991 was the year that TOD had its first international tour. TOD was invited to perform at the World Federation of the Deaf Congress in Tokyo, Japan. TOD was chosen as one of the three best Deaf theatre companies performing at the Congress. By 1992, the company expanded this touring record to include Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia.

From 1993 onwards, TOD started to expand the number of different audiences other than school and main stage productions. A number of different productions, short and long, were for different organisations, fundraising events, and festival activities. CASTLES IN THE AIR and AHOY! were some of the shows specially made for these events. TOD is the only professional Deaf theatre company in Australia and one of the country's premier theatre-for-young-people (TYP) teams.

**THEATRE OF THE DEAF IS ASSISTED BY THE PERFORMING ARTS
BOARD OF THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL AND THE N.S.W.
GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE MINISTRY FOR THE ARTS.**