

NSW THEATRE OF THE DEAF

The NSW Theatre of the Deaf is the only professional deaf theatre group in Australia, though there are amateur groups in most capital cities. The Company had its origin in the early seventies under the guidance of the Adult Deaf Society of NSW and most especially through the efforts of one of its Welfare Officers, Mr Nick Neary, a man with experience of deaf theatre in England.

In 1979, with the backing of the Australia Council and the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust, the Company was launched as a fully professional theatre company. From that time the Company has continued to develop, working in schools, with community groups, in theatres and even on television.

The Company consists of deaf and hearing actors working together in a theatrical form which interlinks sign language, mime, visual communication, gesture and voice. This format has proved very successful and the Company has been very popular with schools and other audiences.

The Company really came into its own in 1981. Highlights of the year include:

- * Performances at the Moomba Festival in Melbourne.
- * A tour of Tasmania in June/July.
- * The Company performed the Unheard World of Jasper Lawson in front of HRH The Prince of Wales at a celebration to mark IYDP.
- * Mrs Nola Colefax, Assistant Director of the Company, received the Order of Australia Medal for her services to deaf theatre.
- * The Company performed in over 400 schools to over 60,000 children.
- * The Company presented PICTURES WORDS AND OTHER SIGNS in conjunction with the part-time group at The Stables Theatre in February.
- * The Company presented an adapted production of THE WINTERS TALE in conjunction with the part-time group in The Stables Theatre in July. Both productions were very well received by their audiences.
- * Two country tours were made of the Grafton area and the Bathurst area.
- * There were many community performances particularly for IYDP functions.

This year, 1982, the Company has expanded. Two extra deaf actors have been employed, one as a trainee. One extra hearing actor has joined the Company, so there are now two teams on the road. In this way we hope to double the number of schools we can visit. Colin Allen and David London, the Company's two senior deaf actors are Production Managers and leaders of the two teams.

Colin Allen has now gone to America to attend the National Theatre of the Deaf Summer School in Connecticut USA. He is planning to stay and work with a deaf theatre company in America before returning to Australia. Carol Lee Aquiline from the National Theatre of the Deaf has come to work with the Company while Colin is on leave. Her vast experience will be of great benefit to the Company.

In April, the Company toured the Lismore/Coffs Harbour area. Schools in that region were most enthusiastic and the Company hopes to return next year. Plans are underway for further tours of New South Wales country regions.