e: auslanstageleft@gmail.com w: auslanstageleft.com.au f: auslan stage left m: 0403 227 978

end of year update

Want to work with us? Send an email! **December 2015**

Another successful year…

In its third year, Auslan Stage Left has been involved with 188 productions, festivals and staged events. In a year alone!

Welcome to another edition of our e-news! We can't believe how fast 2015 has been barreling along! And hot off the press, our Communications Coordinator just passed her NAATI Paraprofessional exam – congratulations Ilana! We knew you could do it! In the above right corner is Tyson Boal and Ramas Rentelis (deaf interpreter) who recently interpreted children's show "The Listies Ruin Christmas" together at Malthouse Theatre, with Cheryl Sandilands as feed. Having deaf interpreters is something Auslan Stage Left intends to do more of in 2016… watch this space!

Auslan Stage Left is managed by three people – Susan Emerson, Medina Sumovic and Ilana Gelbart.

EOI

Auslan Stage Left will hold more Foundations of Theatre Interpreting training in 2016 with Della Goswell and Alex Jones. This is open to interpreters and deaf consultants from all over Australia. If you are interested in attending, please email auslanstageleft@gmail.com

Note: training will be held in one state only so you will be required to travel at your own expense.

"Break a Finger!" Musical Theatre Interpreting training

Della Goswell

Looking back on the workshop, I think we all achieved a lot in a very short time. For Alex (Jones) and I it was the first Musical-specific training we have run for ASL – a bit of an experiment! However the structure was based on the earlier ASL Foundations of Theatre Interpreting workshops, where the first day is more theoretical (with activities for interpreter skills development and awareness) and Day 2 is more hands-on.

On the second day, the interpreters teamed up with deaf consultants to apply the theory to practice. The language consultants had training sessions on the key skills they need to bring, in between giving feedback to their interpreter pairs. Although the final 'shows' were only 2-3 mins long – it needed the whole day's effort to transform their allocated songs into an Auslan translation that transferred the (layers of) message & meaning beyond the words. A reminder to all of us re how long it takes to do this task. The group was from all over Australia. They were enthusiastic and willing to take risks – from aspiring performers to seasoned professionals. It was invaluable to have industry perspectives and advice from Todd McKenney (ASL's patron) and Elle Evangelista (dance performer). We also had input from Danny McDougall (doing theatre interpreting research), and learned that Australian performance interpreting ideas and process is up there with best practice in the USA – good to know :).

Video highlights:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QROr4jzWhg

Strictly Ballroom: Audience Feedback w/ Michelle Stark

My family and I recently attended the Brisbane Auslan Interpreted performance of Strictly Ballroom. What a show! The music, the costumes, the set…… the interpreters! As a hearing person, attending an interpreted performance allows to me share the theatre experience with Deaf friends….it also allows me to sneak peaks at fellow interpreters at work. J While theatre interpreting is not an area that I have any real aspirations to work in, I'm always fascinated with sign language use, the choices that interpreters make in interpretations and how co-interpreters work together. Alex Jones and Chevoy Sweeney did an amazing job! The synergy between them was obvious and they had clearly worked hard to maintain consistency across their style and sign choices. While I only glimpsed between them and the set, their free interpretation of sometimes very rapid fire dialogue was delivered beautifully. They clearly put a lot of time and effort into their preparation with the consultant, Della Goswell and it showed.

I have seen Deaf Interpreters at work before, but always in situations where they have had some kind of 'feed', be it through a sign language or through captioning. The fact that Alex worked without any kind of visual input from the stage, and purely from loud sound based cues and from timing with Chevoy's interpretation (albeit in his peripheral vision) was fascinating!

Job very well done Alex, Chevoy, Della and Auslan Stage Left! My family and I had a ball!

Julie Judd's comedy experience

We spoke with interpreter Julie Judd about working with popular comedian Julia Morris!

Working with Julia was fun, but stressful because I had no idea about what the heck she was going to say! I learned that I need to vary my signs for one particular swear word, as it turns out the 'f' word really does have different meanings depending on the context. That was certainly something I hadn't really thought of before! The gig was almost two hours long but it went by in a flash. I was pleased to notice that the deaf audience members were laughing along with everyone else. One downside of such a long gig was being unaware I had a huge cramp in my toe from standing still for so long…when I walked off stage I nearly tripped over myself!

52 Storey Treehouse w/ Paula Bun

I thoroughly enjoyed working on 52-Storey Treehouse. I love kids shows so this was right up my alley! The content was funny and silly and we could be really cheeky. We went to see the show and I couldn't stop laughing, such a clever adaption of the books to create a lively visually appealing show for kids. There was some play on words so Adrian and I along with Gemma, our language consultant, tried to match with an equivalent, Auslan play on signs, so it was a visual gag. It was such a pleasure to work with Adrian as well as he also loves a good kids show, he was a great co-interpreter! Had to hold back a few giggles because it just was hilarious working on the translation. Interpreting 52-Storey Treehouse was truly an awesome experience.

Danny!

Danny McDougall graced our shores with a visit in July. Danny is undertaking his PhD research in theatre interpreting and spent some quality time with Susan Emerson and Daniel Hately for this purpose. He also delivered some training on "Text Analysis for the Theatre" and contributed to our Musical Theatre Interpreting training.

"It is hard to believe that six months have gone by since my research visit to Melbourne, which was made possible by the kind welcome of Auslan Stage Left and the local Deaf and interpreting communities. The purpose for my visit was to conduct research for my PhD at Gallaudet University's Department of Interpretation.

My research focus is interpreted theatre. In June, I conducted a series of research interviews and attended performances of The Lion King, interpreted by Auslan Stage Left's Susan Emerson and Daniel Hately. It feels like I have never really left, because I am currently reviewing video and audio from interviews conducted in June.

Research brought me to Melbourne – but, the trip amounted to so much more. Over four weeks, I was warmly greeted by members of the local Deaf community, interpreters, and theatre folk: All was liaised brilliantly by Auslan Stage Left. I will be forever indebted to everyone I met. After leaving Melbourne, I attended the SLANZ conference in Christchurch, which included a trip to the local Deaf club and a very welcoming community of local Deaf people and interpreters.

Each moment, each face, and each performance is written on my heart and in my head. To help me remember how awesome it all was, I filmed several video blogs along the way. If you care to see how wonderful you are in my eyes, check out the link, below. As I continue to analyze the results of the interviews conducted in Melbourne, I will begin to report results in published papers and in my dissertation. I'll be sure to keep in touch."

http://www.terptheatre.com/category/bookblog/

Auslan Stage Left wishes to thank Auslan Connections and their generous support of this workshop.

"Text Analysis for the Theatre" workshop

Participant Erin Gook shares her experience of Danny McDougall's workshop.

The 'Text Analysis for the Theatre' workshop presented by Danny McDougall, MA, CSC and current PhD candidate at Gallaudet University was an inspiring journey into the increasing specialist area of theatre and artistic performance interpreting. It was fascinating to learn what is presently taking place in this area comparatively.

Danny introduced what he referred to as the "thread of decision making". This relates to our unpacking of the script to determine how we present the story in the target language. He was most emphatic that we are to ask ourselves "what is the intent of the author?' and offering that it is not the interpreters place to decide on how the script be interpreted. He encouraged interpreter practitioners to consult with authors, actors and directors where possible to inform their choices, but noting that the author, director and actors also will each have interpreted the script in their own way. An interesting perspective Danny offered was that the script is a framework which is influenced by the moment in time. He cited by way of the analogy, the events of 9/11 may give a script written in 1938 different meaning today and we must be conscious of these influences when making linguistic choices.

Danny presented an approach to character division; how we as interpreters decide which roles to take on. He presented examples of the different ways this may be done. One such example of character assignment was to adopt strict male/female roles. He did stress that there are a great many considerations to be made and this may include how weighted (dialogue heavy) the characters may be, an interpreter's familiarity with the role/show, clarity ie, one interpreter takes on the role of the lead character for the entire performance and does not deviate. This enables the Deaf audience to identify who is interpreting which part. I was also intrigued to discover that the interpreter who is most enthusiastically drawn to a character or show is sometimes not the appropriate person for the role, and with some unpacking and reflection will understand why this is so and that this realisation can be personally challenging and potentially a blow to the ego but all for the greater good.

"Text Analysis for the Theatre" (continued...)

Danny highlighted the importance of a production meeting between the interpreters and Deaf consultant at which such time a read-through takes place and decisions are made on strategy. Name signs are devised (noting and according to Danny, "do not fingerspell on stage - EVER!), character division takes place, what is signed in unison and what is 'parroted'. Which words/phrases are repeated throughout the script and being aware of the importance and relevance of this device.

Once the team have been to see the performance, a physical analysis is made, noting where the actors are positioned on stage at any one time. In situations where actors swap characters, should the interpreters also swap characters for the purpose of easier identification of interpreter = actor. At this point in the presentation Danny discussed what he called "the OFF interpreter dilemma". I found this topic fascinating. He gave the example of a solo musical number where only one interpreter is 'on' and the sometimes awkward appearance of the 'off' interpreter. He showed a video clip example of how this can be successfully managed. While the song was being signed, the second or 'off' interpreter crouched beside the working or 'on' interpreter. The 'off' interpreter remained in character, looked up at the 'on' interpreter, completely engaged without being too obvious to the audience. Another suggestion was for the 'off' interpreter to step out of the light to better enable focus to be drawn to the 'on' interpreter. I was very fortunate to work with another interpreter who attended this workshop on a theatre performance that took place soon after. With the encouragment of our Deaf consultant, we felt safe to trial this as well as a number of techniques presented by Danny and were blessed with some wonderful feedback.

I was rather overwhelmed, in a very positive way, that by adding this other layer of engagement to the interpretation enabled me to feel very moved by the other interpreter's character and in turn informed my own character's responses. I actually felt when to 'keep it small', when a lowering of the eyes was a better choice than to physically lift my hands in response. In our debrief following the performance, we were able to identify where strategies we had learned from the script analysis workshop had truly enhanced our interpretation. We agreed that we felt the workshop had offered us a sense of permission to try something new and different and also bolstered our confidence.

There is great deal more I could offer in terms of reflection on this wonderful workshop and strongly encourage anyone already engaged in theatre and performance interpreting to pursue Danny's research in this area, it will only enhance your work and fall further in love with this type of interpreting. I would love to see the conversation and professional development in this field continue. It is exciting to see how through Auslan Stage Left's advocacy, promotion and provision of interpreters the opportunity for Deaf patrons to attend the theatre, comedy, forums, poetry, etc continues to thrive and flourish. It is an exciting time indeed.

Handel: Messiah w/ Auslan choir

Congratulations to the signing choir that recently performed at the Sydney Opera House with the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs over the weekend. Handel's Messiah was sung by over 400 voices, accompanied by a signing choir of 18. Special thanks to Alex Jones and Michelle Maguire for their amazing efforts in making this happen, from start to end. Auslan Stage Left was very proud to be a part of this historic event.

Cheryl & Erin – I am a Miracle

Peter – Mabo Oration

Mikey & Sue – The Importance of Being Earnest

Michelle & Marc – Sophisticated Lady

Paula - LEFT

Danielle & Erin – They Saw a Thylacine

Paul & Cheryl – John Smith (UK deaf comedian)

Nicole & Chevoy – RJ Mittee

Kirri – Glory Whole

Maree & Mikey – The Present

Michelle w/ families meeting cast – Peppa Pig

Susan, Mikey & Alex – CATS

The Sound of Music

Daniel, Michelle & Ramas

Auslan Stage Left recently announced the interpreting team for the upcoming Australian tour of The Sound of Music. Daniel Hately and Michelle Ashley are the interpreters, Ramas Rentelis is the Language Consultant, and Della Goswell will mentor Daniel and Michelle (having interpreted the production herself, with Jemina Napier).

Every few weeks the team will upload a Vlog, sharing their experience of the process – from initial translations, rehearsals, working with the consultant, researching the story, sourcing outfits, and more! This is a wonderful opportunity for interpreters wanting to do theatre interpreting, and for deaf audiences to have insight into the entire process our interpreting teams go through to bring it all together.

Ticketing for this tour will be managed differently to other shows. The ticketing is being hosted by Auslan Stage Left to ensure that the right people are accessing these tickets. Also, tickets for deaf people are being released much earlier than those for other audiences! Don't miss out. Sydney is almost sold out already, and Brisbane is now on sale!

SAVE THE DATES:

Sydney 18th February * Brisbane 19th April * Melbourne 13th July

Upcoming shows

MELBOURNE

12th Dec: ***Buyer & Cellar*** w/ Ben Souter & Michelle Ashley

12th Jan: ***The Three Little Pigs*** w/ Michelle A & Tyson Boal

20th Jan: ***CATS*** w/ Mikey Webb & Susan Emerson

30th Jan: ***Good Mourning Mrs Brown*** w/ Susan E & Daniel Hately

SYDNEY

16th Jan: ***Circus Oz*** w/ Kellie Willenberg & Nicole Clark

16th Jan: ***La Verita*** w/ Dalia Rosza Brown & Rosemary Profilio

19th Jan: ***52 Storey Treehouse*** w/ Adrian Priem & Paula Bun

18th Feb: ***The Sound of Music*** w/ Michelle A & Daniel H

BRISBANE

16th Jan: ***Les Miserables*** w/ Susan E & Karen Clare

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

11th Dec
Carols by Whittlesea (Mill Park)
Manningham Carols (Doncaster)

12th Dec
Carols by the Lake (Coburg)

13th Dec
Monash Carols by Candlelight
Carols by Kingston (Highett)
Whitehorse Carols (Nunawading)
Carols in the Park (Moonee Ponds)

http://www.auslanstageleft.com.au/upcoming-shows/

Language Consultant experience

At Auslan Stage Left we are proud to involve language/ cultural consultants on every show possible. This assists in the journey from script to stage and allows our interpreters to delve deeply into the language to create a high quality end translation. Consultant Marnie Kerridge shared her journey working on the musical Les Miserables.

On my Facebook memories, recently a post came up on the 15th October which told me it was exactly one year since the Auslan interpreted performance of Les Miserables occurred. I was flooded with so many good memories. I am thrilled that so far, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney have seen this magnificent performance interpreted. Brisbane is next and then it will be the end of a wonderful journey for this production.

When you love a theatre show, the work involved with consulting does not feel like a chore. It is an escape and an opportunity to delve further into the mysteries of the story. The need to make sure that the end result matches and adds to the dramatic element of the show is more intense. It has to be perfect. The translations have to be as consistent and accurate as they can be. Considering the different layers of meaning and their interpretations within Les Miserables was not an easy task. Working with two fabulous interpreters, Susan and Karen, made this so much easier and I just loved discussing and analyzing the themes and subplots and working with them to ensure a visually accurate representation of the show.

The consultancy for me was a learning experience, being my first show and I am sure I made many mistakes. Learning how to be assertive in a positive and polite manner with the production was an education in itself and a process I am still fine-tuning. Being in awe of Susan and Karen's translation skills meant I perhaps wasn't too critical and thorough enough early on in the consultancy. It was challenging for me to throw away my literal word for word interpretation of songs and to focus on the themes and messages within and ensure this was conveyed. Being an oral deafie for most of my life, I just love belting out songs in the safety of my car (with the windows tightly wound up) and know most of the lyrics off by heart. I have a stronger appreciation and understanding of the translation process now.

In every job, you learn something new about yourself, about others and about the world. All I can say is, what a wonderful blessing that I had a dream first job with a musical I am hopelessly head over heels for. It wasn't a job; it was an invigorating journey. Long live Les Mis!

One of the most joyous things to see is deaf people enjoy interpreted theatre with their hearing family members – a cultural experience that all can share in! Grace Rattray (a Perth interpreter) recently attended The Lion King with her deaf mother.

"Both Susan and Daniel did an amazing job of interpreting not only the songs and dialogue but also the emotion of the whole story - facial expressions were on point! The Lion King is such a visually stimulating show on its own, how lucky are we to be able to view this alongside with our beautiful visual language! Thanks again Auslan Stage Left for allowing me to enjoy a day at the theatre with my Mum. You guys rock!"

Cats & Facebook w/ Mikey Webb

I recently had the wonderful chance to work on CATS the Musical. My co-terp was Susan Emerson with Alex Jones being our language consultant. For those who don't know us, I am based in Brisbane, Susan lives in Melbourne and Alex lives in Sydney. So…. how did we collaborate? Initially, we discussed the idea of regular Skpye/web based meetings etc…. but due to busy lives, living in three different states, and the severe LACK of daylight savings in Queensland, this made the idea problematic. We held a few sessions, until the idea of setting up a closed Facebook group came up…. from that, we never looked back.

Having the closed group allowed us the freedom to work on an individual basis without the need to meet via computer 'face to face' each time we had a thought. The page enabled us to share information; bios etc, without countless emails bouncing back and forward. All the info was kept in the same place, making it much easier to access. The musical called for several songs to be shared by Susan and myself. So after meeting online and discussing the translation, etc, the lead of the song would upload a video, and the other would respond with their own comments and their own version. It also allowed us the chance to watch each clip several times and critique and comment/question. It also meant that Alex could do the same, also alleviating time pressures on when we could all get together. Alex would either leave comments via text, or he would then film himself with his ideas and feedback. Overall, a very smooth process that suited the needs of three people living in different states.

When Susan and I did meet online, the discussions were more effective due to having reference points that were made in the closed Facebook group. All that was left was to polish our translations, and then get together to ensure our duets matched. This Facebook group will also come in handy, as we are interpreting the show again in a few months, so to have the video footage to reflect upon and re-acquaint ourselves with each song before going into rehearsals again. Auslan Stage Left will also be able to use these videos for training purposes, so it is a win-win all round.

CATS is coming to Melbourne on 20th January. Starring Delta Goodrem!

St Martins Youth Theatre & Auslan Stage Left

"St Martins has partnered with Auslan Stage Left for the last few years – they have run short courses in Auslan for our staff, provided interpreting services for our staff meetings and events and of course, worked with us to interpret our performances. The whole team are fabulous, they really understand our art, never back away from the challenges we throw at them, and work amazingly hard to deliver incredible results. We love them!" - **Narda Shanley**

Right: Erin, Alex & Michelle at St Martin's Youth Theatre's production of The Bacchae

Matilda

Christy Filipich

I first read Matilda when I was nine years old, and as a precocious reader at a young age, I immediately identified with Matilda. Many hours were spent trying to move a pencil with the power of my eyes – unfortunately all I ever achieved were headaches! I now have several copies of Matilda, with different cover art, including an edition in French. I'm also an enormous fan of Tim Minchin, so imagine my excitement when it was announced he was writing the songs for Matilda the Musical, which are wordy and delightful and complex. When Auslan Stage Left approached me about interpreting for Matilda – there was not a single moment of hesitation – it was a YES!

My team was fabulous – Karen Clare with her incredible wealth of experience and Rachelle Stevens, a fantastic Deaf consultant who'd seen a captioned performance of the production in London on the West End. However we faced challenges from the very beginning. Besides a short rehearsal time, our team were in two different states and the performance was in a third. The first time we were even in the same room was the day before the performance when we were finally in Sydney and had access to the venue to see the show for the first time.

In order to work on the translation and rehearse, we used Skype, which proved to be a blessing and a curse! While it is a fantastic tool, we found that with three of us connecting from different locations, there were often connection issues where at least one of us was blurry. So, our Skype meetings were often a mix of Auslan and English messaging.

Rehearsing songs to be able to work on synchronicity was very tricky when Skype wasn't working optimally. One of the strategies we came up with was for whichever interpreter was the lead character for the song would film the song translation, and the other interpreter would use that to rehearse to. Then, so that Rachelle could see whether the translations worked – particularly if we were signing overlapping parts in the song - I would film myself signing along with the video in frame.

This was also a useful strategy for clarifying parts of the show which wouldn't be interpreted to throw focus on the stage. Without giving away too many spoilers – there's some great visual moments, some of which are narrated by characters as they happen. Part of the challenge of translation was to decide which moments were visual enough to stand on their own, and which needed a quick set-up in Auslan first before throwing to the stage.

Matilda (continued…)

A major translation challenge was the wordy nature of Tim Minchin's songs. They're brilliant and funny but some were very wordy, fast, and linguistically complex. This meant the translations were often quite different to the English text and could be tricky to remember!
Another challenge was a cast of child actors. Children's voices can be difficult to distinguish, they can bring different aspects of their personality to the role, and there are usually alternating casts of children – there are four different Matildas, for example. The Matilda on the archival footage we had for rehearsal, was unlikely to be the Matilda on the night, and wasn't the Matilda we saw the night before. Likewise for the other children in the cast.

Because we weren't going to be together to rehearse until the day before, we knew there were bound to be some kinks that we didn't have time to iron out. So we also put certain strategies into place for the actual performance. Particularly around the simultaneity – for all of the instances of simultaneity, one of us was the lead. If there was any doubt that we weren't going to pull it off, then the other interpreter simply wouldn't sign in unison and would just react appropriately in character instead (nodding along, etc) while the lead interpreter did that part solo instead.

I will be forever grateful to Auslan Stage Left for the chance to finally BE Matilda! Also thanks to Karen and Rachelle for being a great team to work with, particularly considering the challenge of distance and three hour time differences. It was great to meet some of the Sydney Deaf Community who had come to watch the show. I'm so glad I had the chance to be part of introducing one of my favourite childhood stories to the Deaf Community ☺

Catch Matilda in Melbourne in 2016!

Christmas Carols: Intent, Translation and Production

Michelle Ashley and Julie Judd recently facilitated this workshop for over 70 attendees. Carolyn Montague from ASLIA Victoria comments on her experience.

On the 10th November, over 70 people gathered at JPC (John Pierce Centre), to participate in a Christmas Carols workshop run in partnership with Auslan Stage Left and ASLIA Vic. The group included participants from the ACT, who joined the session by accessing live-streaming. It was great seeing such a diverse group of people gathered for the occasion. Those attending included deaf interpreters, deaf consultants, interpreters, TODs, and some eager Auslan students. The feeling from the start was that of fun, support and collaboration, with all welcomed and encouraged to participate.

The first session was presented by Michelle Ashley and Julie Judd. Each shared their experiences interpreting Christmas Carols, while also discussing the finer details of analysing the song to find the true meaning. Their insight was invaluable, enabling us to understand the complex process of translating any source that has metaphorical content. They were then joined by a panel who passed on their experiences from the perspective of interpreting and, importantly, from members of the Deaf community, sharing their personal reflections of experiencing Christmas carols.

Following a short break to enjoy a light supper, we were placed in to small groups and assigned a Christmas carol or song to translate. Bit by bit, drawing on the knowledge of native Auslan users and sharing each other's input, we worked it out- then we added the music… It was amazing how the style of music also influenced how you would sign the piece. My group's song was 'Let it snow', which I knew as a Bing Crosby favourite (laid-back and traditional). This version, however, was a jazzy version, which meant a different style of delivery all together.

Some brave participants finished the night by getting up and performing for us. They were fantastic!

I hope that this workshop is the first of many, learning the finer points of this specialised area of interpreting theatrical content. It was a great night. You can now purchase this PD at aslia.com.au

Auslan Stage Left and ASLIA Victoria wish to thank Carolyn for the amazing catering she provided for this workshop! Delicious!

Auslan Stage Left has over 5,300 likes on Facebook. Thanks for your support!